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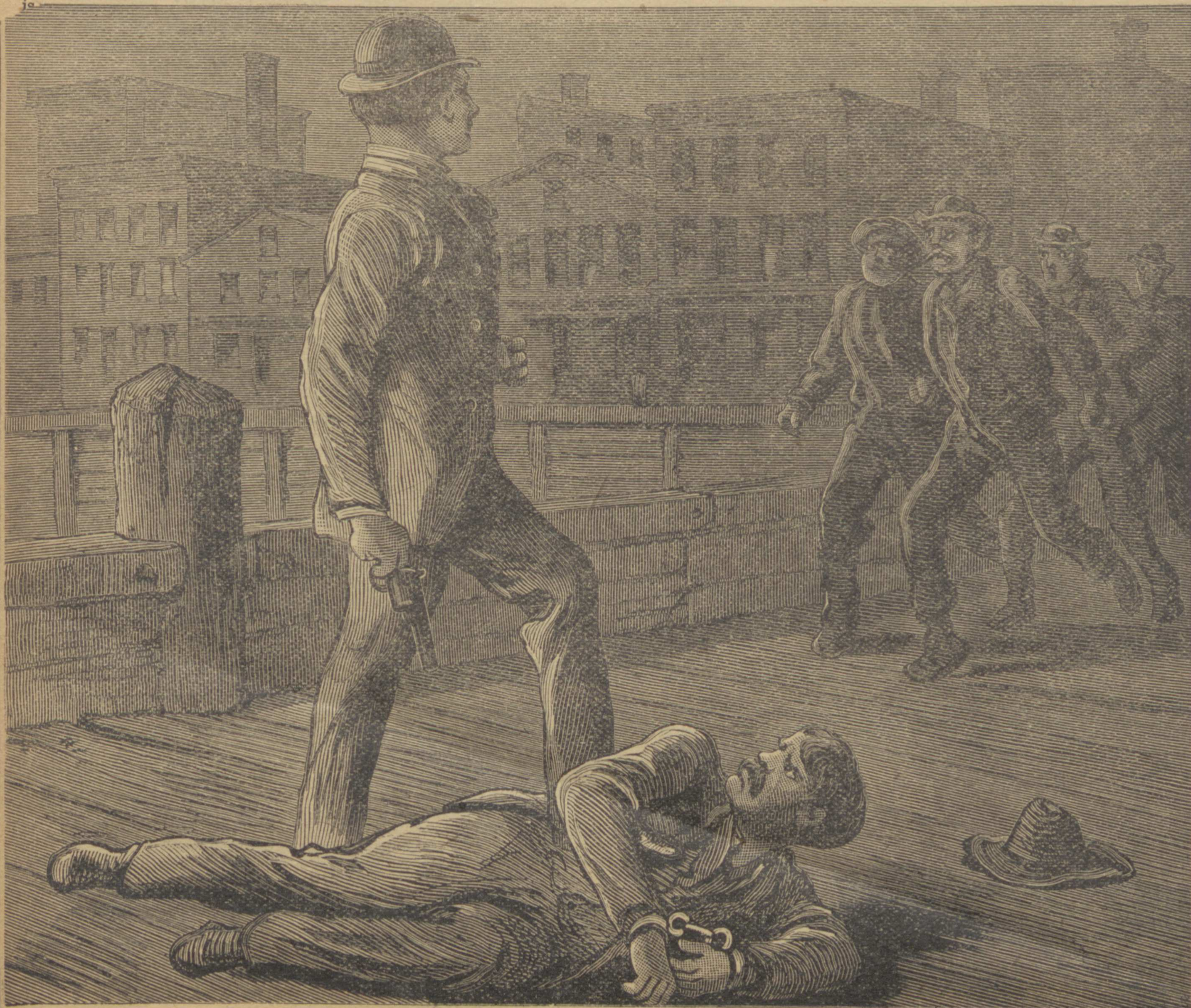
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Lightning Leo's Luck; or, The Rats of the River.

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BY REDMOND BLAKE. RUTH NEUMANN.



"MY REVOLVER IS USELESS AND I AM HEMMED IN BY THE GANG!" CRIED LIGHTNING LEO.

Lightning Leo's Luck; OR, THE RATS OF THE RIVER.

BY REDMOND BLAKE,
AUTHOR OF "LIGHTNING LEO," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.

IN THE NIGHT AND ON THE RIVER.

NINE o' the night in the leafy month of June. In the sky a new moon was struggling to break through the thick clouds which obscured her light. A heavy mist hung over the surface of the East River, as the body of water which washes the shore of the great city of New York on its eastern side is called.

From the foot of Thirty-fourth street upward the water-way is lonely indeed in the dark hours of the night.

There are few docks, and little local commerce even in the day time. After darkness lowers, the gloom of desolation hangs over the river.

Through the thick mist came a light boat propelled by the sturdy arms of a single man.

He had come out into the stream from somewhere in the neighborhood of "Turtle Bay," and was rowing up the river, keeping well in to the shore.

Suddenly the man stopped rowing, and, half turning, looked anxiously over the bow of the boat.

"W'ot's that?" he muttered. "Durn me if it didn't sound like the dip of oars!"

Again the slight sound, like the splash of water, came to his ears, and then, specter-like, a long dark boat rose out of the gloom.

It was full of men. A moment more and it came alongside of the solitary oarsman's craft; strong hands grasped the gunwale, bringing the two boats together, and the helmsman of the strange craft flashed the light of a bull's-eye lantern full on the face of the single man.

Just at that moment the moon struggled through the clouds, lighting up the darkness.

The large craft was the harbor police boat, and it was the sergeant in command who held the lantern.

"Hello, Porgy Jim, is that you?" the officer exclaimed.

"Yes, it's me," the other replied, trying to grin in a good-natured way.

Jim was a coarse-featured, middle-aged man—a typical lower-class New Yorker.

"What are you up to?" the officer demanded, suspiciously, and he flashed the lantern into the bottom of the boat.

"Oh, you needn't examine this mud-scow!" Porgy protested. "Everything is all right. I'm on the square now!"

"How long since?" queried the sergeant, in a tone full of doubt.

"Ever since Lightning Leo nailed me for a little hanky-panky job in Chambers street," the other explained. "He came so close to getting me dead to rights that it was a warning to me not to try any more monkey business."

"Yes, I remember. And, to my thinking, Leo made a mistake that he didn't try to send you up the river, for it was a moral certainty that you were one of the men who cracked the crib."

"Maybe so, but the evidence ag'in' me was so weak that his nibs, the district attorney, didn't think it was worth while to try for a conviction, and so they let me go with a warning that if I got nailed ag'in I might not be so lucky."

"What little game are you going to play to-night? Have you turned river rat, thinking you will be able to do better on the water than on land?"

"Oh, come now, Sergeant O'Toole, ain't you kinder hard on a cove?" Porgy Jim exclaimed. "I wish I may die if I ain't on the honest lay now! I have done a little on the cross, I will admit, but that is all over now. Oh, you kin bet your sweet life that I am square, I am!"

"Oh, yes; you wouldn't take anything out of your reach!" the officer returned, sarcastically. "And I don't believe you would steal a red-hot stove for the world, but you would be apt to wait a long time for it to cool, if there was a good chance for getting away with it."

"You are too hard on a feller," Porgy Jim averred with a grin, taking the officer's remark with perfect good humor.

"Oh, no, I am not," the sergeant replied. "You can't fool me for a cent! You were able to pull the wool over Leo's eyes because you are a sweet talker, and he thought, I suppose, that,

after such a close call as you had, you would conclude that the cross business does not pay.

"It was natural, but I know you too well to believe that. You have been crooked for years, and when a man has been at it as long as you have it is a hard matter for him to turn over a new leaf."

"Sergeant, you are away off! I'm as square now as a die!"

"Give us a rest!" the sergeant retorted, incredulously. "If you haven't gone in with the river thieves, what are you doing in this boat out on the river at this time of night?"

"I'm jest a rowing for exercise," Jim explained, grinning in the face of the officer. "Yes-sir-ee, jest fer the good of my health! I hain't been well lately, and my doctor, he says to me, says he: 'W'ot you need, James, is a little gentle exercise in the open air; git a boat and go out on the river; you're threatened with consumption and you want to do something to expand your lungs.'"

"You know, sergeant, I am peddling with a hoss and wagon now, and so I don't get much leg exercise."

"Altogether too thin!" the officer declared; "and you cannot stuff me with such trash as that. From the fact of your being out here in a boat I know you are in the river thief line, for there is a nest of the rats hereabouts, and, one of these days, I will drop onto it and pull the whole concern, so, if you are wise, you will draw out before the explosion comes," he warned.

Porgy shook his head and assumed a mournful look.

"This comes of being a sergeant of police," he remarked. "Always suspicious that somebody is a-going to do something that he hadn't oughter, and you don't take no stock in a cove when he gives it to you on the dead level that he has quit his foolish ways and is on the square."

"Where did you get that boat?" asked the sergeant, abruptly.

"It's Peter Kelly's—the man w'ot keeps the coal yard. There is his name; you ken see for yourself!" and he pointed to the stern.

"I sometimes peddle coal in the winter, and get my stock of Peter, so when I wanted a boat I borrowed his."

The sergeant knew the man who kept a coal-yard on the river front.

"Well, Pete is square enough, but I have my doubts in regard to you," the sergeant persisted.

"I know there is a lot of river thieves whose headquarters are somewhere in this neighborhood and I have a strong suspicion that you are on that lay now," the officer continued. "If you are I will nail you one of these days as sure as you are born!"

"Let go, and give way, men!"

Away went the patrol boat, and as it vanished in the gloom, Porgy Jim relieved his feelings by shaking his fist at it.

"There goes one of the kind of men it makes a feller feel good to put a knife inter!" he exclaimed. "If I should ever get a chance at O'Toole with a brick it would be a deal of satisfaction for me to lay him out."

Having thus expressed his opinion he took a look around.

It was a flood tide and during the conversation the boats had drifted up the stream.

"I must be pretty near the pier, and if I don't keep my eyes open I may go by it in the darkness. If I get well inshore I can hardly miss it."

So Porgy Jim bent to his oars again, and as he rowed, his thoughts found vent in words:

"The sergeant has an idea there is a nest of river rats in this neighborhood?" he murmured.

"Well, he is right enough about that, but, smart as he is, I doubt if he will ever be able to nail 'em."

"I must give Black Aaron a tip, though, that the sergeant has a notion of the game, so he will be on his guard."

Just then the moon broke through the clouds again, and the oarsman, casting a glance over his shoulder, saw the pier he sought, about a hundred feet ahead.

Upon the end of this pier sat two men, evidently waiting for the boat.

The moon was obliging enough to shine for a while, so that the pair had light sufficient for the embarkation.

One was an old weather-beaten fellow whose face told plainly of strong drink and many hardships.

The other was young, good-looking, and evidently a gentleman, although there was a peculiar way about him that was not agreeable.

"Arn't you a little late?" the young man asked.

"Yes, it is a dark night, and a man has to be careful how he rows, so it ain't possible to make good time. Then, too, I had the luck to run across the patrol boat, and the sergeant nailed me at once."

"You were all right!" the old fellow declared.

"He hadn't any business to stop you, anyway."

"It is a trick that these cops have, you know," the boatman replied. "I reckon the sergeant thought he had something worth overhauling. It is O'Toole's notion that some river rats have got a headquarters hereabouts, and he thought he had made a big find when he came alongside of me."

"I gave him a beautiful steer, too," and Porgy Jim chuckled. "I told him I had been ordered by my doctor to take a little gentle exercise on the river for my health, 'cos I wasn't very well."

"Oh, yes, you're a healthy sick man, you are!" the old fellow assumed.

"The cop wouldn't have it, of course, but as I hadn't any plunder in my boat, and, as it isn't against the law for a man to pull on the river, even if it is after dark, he was obliged to let me go."

"He is right about the river thieves, though, isn't he?" the young man asked. "Those are the parties we are going to see."

"Oh, yes, he had got that down fine," Porgy Jim admitted. "But, that is all the good it will do him, I reckon. He will be many an hour older before he nails Black Aaron."

"That is the name of the man, eh?" the gentleman asked.

"Yes, and he is one of the best men that has ever been in the business!" Porgy Jim declared. "He has never been caught, and though he has been suspected of being a receiver of stolen goods for years, no cop has ever yet been smart enough to get a hold on him."

"One of the biggest and squarest 'fences' in the city!" the old man assured. "A 'fence' is a man who buys the plunder from the men who swipe it, you know," he explained. "Without the fences crooked coves couldn't live."

CHAPTER II.

BLACK AARON.

"Oh, yes, I understand that," the young fellow remarked. "If a man could not dispose of his plunder it would not be of much use for him to steal it."

"Right you are, for ducats!" Porgy Jim exclaimed.

"I have known Black Aaron some years, now, and allers found him to be the squarest kind of a man, so when my pal, here, comes to me about this 'ere business, and says, 'We want to get hold of some first-class high Toby men who kin be depended upon to do a high-toned job, in which there is big money,' I thought of Black Aaron right away."

"You see he does business with all the principal cross men in the country," the old fellow informed, "and so he knows just what the men are and what they can do. I never met him, myself, but I know all about him from pals of mine who have got rid of their stuff through him."

"In fact, you might say that he keeps a sort of an intelligence office for crooked men," Porgy remarked, with a grin.

"S'pose a bank cracksman ran across a chance to make big money, but the job requires three or four men to work it, and he has only a single pal, then he goes to Black Aaron, describes the lay-out, and if Aaron thinks well of the thing he will not only hunt up the men to help do the work, but advance money for expenses and tools, if it is needed."

"A very valuable man to know," the young fellow suggested.

"His house is the end one in the street; it is a tenement-house quarter, pretty rough neighborhood, and Aaron runs a saloon, but that is only a blind," the night-hawker announced. "All sorts of people go to a saloon, and if a good many crooked men drop in, it isn't the proprietor's fault. The cops may growl and threaten to take the license away, on the ground that the saloon ain't anything but a house of call for thieves, yet it is a mighty hard matter to prove anything of the kind."

"Yes, but if the man keeps a saloon, why didn't we go there by way of the street? Why are we taking all this trouble?" the young man asked.

"That is a very natural question, but it is an awful easy one to answer," the old fellow replied.

"This here game that we think of playing is

for a big stake, and we can't be too careful how we work the trick," he continued. "We must take into consideration, too, the fact that we are likely to have to measure wits with the sharpest detective on the force, Lightning Leo, and we must be careful not to give a single point away."

"The odds are big that he will do his best to keep an eye on you, Jim, calculating that you may try to pull a stake out of this affair; and if we go to Black Aaron's saloon, there is a chance that some stool-pigeon may pipe us off, as we are strangers, and carry word to Leo, and that would give him a clew to work on."

"You are right, and I can see now that you are acting prudently in not going openly to the saloon," the young man assented.

"We may have been shadowed," the old fellow observed. "I don't think that we were, for I kept my peepers open and could not detect that anybody was trying to play a game of that kind on us; but, if we were, what kind of a report would the spy be obliged to make?"

"That he followed us to the river; then we got into a boat, went out into the stream and disappeared," the other replied.

"Exactly! and he hadn't any idea where we went, up the river, or down, or across to the Brooklyn shore!" the old man exclaimed, with a chuckle.

"Oh, the game is worked to the queen's taste!" the oarsman declared.

"We ought to be near there now," the old fellow remarked, endeavoring to peer through the darkness.

"Yes, a few minutes more will bring us to the spot," Porgy Jim replied.

"Now, pals, I want you to understand that I am going to put you on a lay to-night which any of the fly cops would give big money to discover."

"As I was a-telling you, Black Aaron's place is next to the river. There isn't any public dock at the foot of the street, but a lumber-yard occupies the space where a dock ought to be. Aaron runs the lumber-yard, too, but under another name, and he has got things fixed so there is a passage from under the lumber-yard into the saloon building, but unless a man knows the secret of how to get at it he might hunt for a month without being able to get onto the racket."

"That is a very ingenious idea," the young man observed.

"Oh, yes, Aaron's head is chuck-full of brains!" the hawker declared.

"And then, he has got the thing fixed, too, so that even if a cove knows the lay of the land, he can't get in if Aaron wants to keep him out."

"The dock is boarded down to the water's edge and is, apparently, just as solid as any dock, but if you touch a certain place in a certain way a part of the side will lift right up, just like a trap-door, so there will be room for a boat to go in under the dock, but if Aaron anticipates danger he kin fix the thing so that it can't be moved."

"The man is certainly a genius!" the gentleman declared.

"The police have never got onto the thing, although it has bothered them a good many times," Porgy Jim remarked.

"You see, the patrol boat has happened to run across some of the river rats with a lot of swag," he continued.

"The rats are all good oarsmen, and their boats are light, so they can make good time."

"They make for the dock, slide around the end, and when the police boat does the same thing the other boat has disappeared. It looks mighty mysterious, you know, and the cops don't know what to make out of it, 'cos as the dock has the sides boarded it doesn't look as if the craft could hide under it like it was hollow."

"It is a mighty big thing!" the old man exclaimed.

By this time the boat was alongside of the lumber-dock.

The sides looked solid, but when Porgy Jim grasped a huge spike-head and pulled, it yielded, and a section of the dock swung inward, and upward, giving ample room for the boat to pass under the dock.

Then when the craft was well clear of the swinging door, the hawker, gave a vigorous pull at another spike, which projected from a pile, and down came the door.

"It is as dark as Egypt!" the old man exclaimed.

"Yes, but the man who knows the ropes don't need no light," Porgy Jim replied.

"There is wire a running along the spiles and all a fellow has to do is to lay hold of it and pull the boat along."

This he proceeded to do, turning the boat toward the shore.

A hundred feet and a stone wall barred the way.

Porgy Jim laid hold of another spike, to which the end of the telegraph wire was fastened.

In answer to the pull there was the sound of a small bell, then a section of the floor of the dock descended, forming an inclined pathway by means of which they could ascend.

Through the opening came a flood of light so the men could proceed without difficulty.

When they reached the floor above, the platform rose to its former position.

The three found themselves in a small room, about ten feet square and seven feet high, built out of matched boards, and without either doors or windows, but the two strangers came to the conclusion that there must be a secret door somewhere in the walls.

There was a table in the center of the apartment, upon which burned a lamp, and a half-a-dozen camp stools stood around the table.

Upon one of the stools sat the notorious Black Aaron in person.

He was a tall, well-built man of fifty-five or thereabouts, with a smoothly shaven face; the features were strongly marked, and his eyes and hair were as black as a crow's wing.

The prominent nose and high cheek-bones betrayed his Hebrew origin, as well as the sallow skin, fully as dark as an Italian's.

"We are here, all right, old man," Porgy Jim remarked as he sat down.

"Yesh, my tear poy, glad to see you," Black Aaron replied, speaking with a decidedly foreign accent.

"These are the coves I spoke to you about," the hawker remarked.

"This gentleman is a swell gambler from the 'tenderloin' district," and he nodded to the young man. "His name is Ruthven."

"Glad to make your acquaintance, my tear sir!" the fence remarked.

"And this here is an old rounder that I reckon you must have heered on many a time, although he says he never met you," and he slapped the other on the back. "Old Socks the cross-men call him."

"Oh, yesh, yesh!" Black Aaron exclaimed. "A hundred times I have heard of Old Socks; a first-class man—when he lets liquor alone," the Jew added with a malicious grin.

"Well, now that is all right!" the old fellow declared.

"I guess some of the boys must 'a' been kidding you," he continued. "I am fond of my booze once in a while, I will admit, but I never let it interfere with business, and the man who says I do is a liar!"

"Ah, yesh, yesh, that is der way to work der trick! Pisiness first and pleasure afterwards!" the old fence remarked.

"That is my motto, every time!" Old Socks affirmed. The two seated themselves.

"Now then we are here for business, Aaron," Porgy Jim observed.

"These coves think they are on a lay which will pan out big money if it is handled in the right way, but the trouble is they are so situated they can't work the trick without assistance, and when they put me onto the matter I thought of you right away."

CHAPTER III. THE SCHEME.

THE old Jew rubbed his hands briskly together while the saturnine smile curled his lips.

"You are right to come to me my tear poy," he remarked. "I am a man who always likes to help the poy along if they get hold of a scheme which is too pig for dem to handle alone."

"Yes, I know that, and so I told my pals here that you were the man to help them to put the thing through," the hawker observed.

"Yesh, yesh, I am always ready for pisiness, if the thing is goot for anything. How mooch monish do you dink dere is in dis ting?"

"Well, really, that is a hard matter to say," the hawker replied, slowly.

"If we could git away with the whole boodle it would be a big strike, for it amounts to a cool hundred thousand."

The old fence was amazed.

"What is dat, my tear?" he exclaimed. "You do not mean a hundred thousand dollars?"

"That is wot I said, and if we got the hull of the boodle that is what we would collar!" Porgy Jim replied.

"Oho! that is a very pig thing indeed!" and again the old Jew rubbed his hands briskly together, a sign that he was deeply interested.

"Yes, it is big enough to give a good stake to a dozen or more, but a couple of good men in addition to us three can handle it all right, I think."

"Go ahead my tear poy, and explain," said the Jew.

"It is a mighty queer case!" Porgy Jim declared with a shake of the head. "For all the world like the strange yarns that are in the newspapers once in a while."

"About a year ago one of the big New York sporting men died. He was supposed to be worth big money, but arter he was dead nobody couldn't find that he had left any money at all, excepting a hundred dollars, or so, that he had in his pockets, just about enough to pay the funeral expenses, and his pal, another big sport, in whose house he died, said the man didn't leave any money that he knew of; he was questioned, you see, 'cos people got an idea that, mebbe, the other man, finding he was going to hop the twig, had given his money to this pal of his'n."

"Did they take der man to be a fool?" Black Aaron exclaimed. "If he got der money, and no one knew anything about it, he would hold on to der cash, of course."

"Most men would, I suppose," the hawker admitted, speaking in a reflective way.

"Nine hundred and ninety-nine men out of a thousand!" the old Jew declared.

"Did you ever hear of Mart O'Neil, the big up-town sport?" Porgy Jim asked.

"Oh, yesh, he is der biggest sport in der city. Everybody dot knows anything about New York is acquainted with der Square Sport."

"Is he the ore man picked out of the nine hundred and ninety-nine?" the hawker questioned.

The old Jew reflected upon the matter for a few moments.

"Well, yesh; if any man in this world would be so pig a fool as to gife up the monish dat he could keep shust as well as not der Square Sport would be abt to be der one."

"He is the pal of the dead man, and the sport put a hundred thousand dollars in his charge just before he died."

"Mine gootness! this is a most interesting story!" Black Aaron declared.

"The man died so quickly after he was taken sick that he only had time to tell O'Neil where the money was, and how he could get it. He didn't give any instructions as to what was to be done with it," Porgy Jim explained.

"If I had been der Square Sport I would hafe known how to act in such a case," the old Jew declared with a grin.

"Oh, yes, you would have done jest as the rest on us would—put the money in your pocket, and said no more about it," the hawker remarked.

"That would be der sensible way!" Black Aaron asserted.

"Yes, but if O'Neil had been in the fashion of doing business in that style he never would have got the title of the Square Sport."

The Jew nodded assent.

"And he is square, you kin bet your sweet life! as square as a die!" Porgy Jim declared.

"Now, wot does he do in this hyer case?" the hawker continued. "Jest as soon as he gits the money all right, he says to himself, says he, where are the legal heirs of this ere dead man, and, blame me! if he didn't set the detectives to work to try for to hunt 'em up so he could pay the money over."

"It is a wonder dat O'Neil has lived so long," the old Jew remarked with a grave shake of the head. "He is too goot for dis world."

"Now this is where my pals here come in," and Porgy Jim nodded to the others.

"Old Socks is a brother of the dead man, and this here sport a nephew."

Black Aaron looked surprised.

"I do not understand dis," he said. "If dese men are der heirs to der monish what is der trouble?"

"The dead bloke had a daughter!" the hawker replied.

"Ah, yesh, I see now; der daughter is der heir."

"That is right! now you have got it down fine, Porgy Jim answered."

"The gal is the one who is going to come in for the cash, and she would have got it long ago, for the man who left it has been dead for over a year, if the Square Sport had been able to find her."

"Yesh, yesh! but dis is very strange it seems to me," the Jew observed.

"That is wot I told you in the beginning; it is a reg'lar fairy story!" Porgy Jim asserted.

"O'Neil knew there was a darter, but he

hadn't any idea where the gal was—didn't even know whether the gal was alive or dead.

"You see the gal went on the stage—became an actress—when she got big enough, and changed her name, which little trick threw the detectives clear off the track."

"Yesh, I haf heard of such t'ings," the old Jew observed with a wise look.

"The gal knew who she was, well enuff, but as her mother had to cut and run from her dad, when she was only a babby, on account of the old man's brutal treatment, she didn't take no stock in her father—never troubled her head as to whether he was dead or alive, and so didn't know that the old man had gone off the hooks and left a big lot of money."

"These pals of mine though felt sure that the old sport had left a pile when he died, and that O'Neil had it; then they run across the gal, and they put up a job to get her in their power so as to get at the money."

"Ah, mine gootness! dat was a smart trick!" Black Aaron declared.

"And the thing would undoubtedly have gone through all right if that infernal Headquarters detective, the feller they call Lightning Leo, hadn't happened to catch on to the racket, and bu'st the hull b'ling up."

"He is a dangerous man," the old Jew asserted, a heavy frown darkening his face. "But a goot many of the poys haf got it in for him, and one of these days der gang will lay him out so he will never trouble anybody, any more."

"I would put a knife in him qui ker than a wink if I got a good chance!" Porgy Jim declared in a ferocious way.

"Oh, yesh, there are lots of der poys who would like to put Lightning Leo where der dogs wouldn't bite him," Black Aaron remarked.

"My pals here had the gal all right, and their programme was to marry her to Ruthven so that as her husband he could git at at the ducats."

"The detective dropped onto the game and bu'st the speculation all to smash," Porgy Jim continued. "But they were wise enuff not to let on either to the gal or the detective why they had put up the job, so the gal doesn't know that there is a big lot of money coming to her."

"Hold on, my tear!" exclaimed the old Jew, abruptly. "What is der name of the girl?"

"Benhaven."

"Aha, I thought so! In der *Herald* of dis morning dere are a couple of personals, one an answer to der other, and as dey fit a case like dis, der idea came to me dat, maybe, dey had somet'ing to do with dis affairs," the old fence observed, shrewdly.

"Yes, we know about the ads," Porgy Jim replied. "The first one says that information is wanted of a girl named Marian Benhaven, and a liberal reward will be paid for any intelligence of the party; apply to Bulwanger's Detective Bureau on Broadway."

"Yesh, dot is one of dem."

"That comes from O'Neil, and he employed these detectives to hunt up the girl."

"Mine gootness! what foolishness!" Black Aaron declared, with a deep sigh. "Shust t'ink of a man going to all dot trouble so as to bay out goot monish which he might shust as well hold onto as not."

"Yes, but that is the kind of man he is, you know," the hawker replied.

"And the other personal says, 'Any one desiring intelligence of the daughter of Richard Benhaven, please address L. L., Police Headquarters, Mulberry street.'"

"L. L. is Lightning Leo," suggested the Jew.

"Yes, that is what we thought."

"The thing is as plain as the nose on your face," Porgy Jim added.

"When Lightning Leo bu'st up my pals' little game he tried to get onto their racket, but they wouldn't give it away, and as the gal didn't want to prosecute on account of their being her relations, the detective couldn't do anything."

"He suspected though that there was some money in the game, for if there hadn't been he reckoned that my pals wouldn't trouble their heads about the gal, and so he has put in the notice in hopes to find out what they were trying to do."

"Yesh, yesh; dot bloodhound has a long head," the old Jew declared.

"It is a sure thing now that the heir and the Square Sport will come together, and she will get her money."

The old Jew nodded assent.

"Now, here is jest where we calculate to come in," the hawker explained.

"It is our idea that this here money is all in cash, or things which are jest the same as cash. United States bonds, or something of that sort."

Again Black Aaron nodded. He was deeply interested in the recital, and was paying earnest attention.

"After the Square Sport and the gal come together, the next thing will be the paying over of the money—"

"Where do you suppose the cash is?" asked the old Jew, abruptly.

"We haven't got any idee," the other replied.

"But it is a part of our programme to shadow O'Neil so that he can't stir a step without our knowledge, and so we hope to find out where the boodle is."

"I see, I see!" Black Aaron exclaimed, wrinkling his brows in thought. "I understand the game."

"By keeping a watch on O'Neil, you expect to learn when der cash is transferred to der girl, and then you hope to get a chance to get at it before she can hide it away in some secure place."

"That is our leetle game to a dot!" Porgy Jim exclaimed.

"And the first p'int, as you will observe, is to shadow O'Neil."

"Yesh, yesh!"

"And that is where you come in," the hawker continued. "We want you to furnish two good men—or, for that matter, as many as will be needed to watch the Square Sport so as to find out just where the boodle is."

"Then, if we can't get at it ourselves, you will have to find the men to do the trick."

"I will do it," the Jew replied, after thinking over the matter for a moment.

"Be at Mike O'ney's saloon in Houston street at twelve to-night, and my men will meet you."

"All right; we will be on hand," Porgy Jim answered.

This ended the interview.

The three departed by the same way in which they came, leaving the old Jew to make his arrangements to supply the "shadows."

CHAPTER IV.

SNARING THE BLOODHOUND.

CORLEA'S HOOK is the old-time name of a point which juts out into the East River from the New York shore, almost directly opposite to Wallabout Bay, where the United States Navy Yard is situated on the Long Island side.

In years gone by the neighborhood of the "Hook" was populated by a tough class of citizens, and though the police have broken up nearly all the gangs, yet enough crooks remain to give the blue-coats plenty of work.

It is a lonely quarter after the shades of darkness have covered in the great city.

Along the deserted river front, about half-an-hour after the time when the police boat overhauled Porgy Jim, came a well-built man, dressed in a dark suit which showed signs of long wear.

In person he was about the medium height, finely proportioned, with regular features, lit up by eyes as keen as the orbs of a hawk.

A quiet-appearing, unassuming fellow with the air of an intelligent mechanic.

He passed the Hook, and when he came to the next pier, hesitated for a moment, cast a rapid glance around, and then, as the moon broke through the clouds, he saw that on the further end of the pier, seated upon the string-piece, was a female form.

"I hardly expected that she would keep the appointment, but I was wrong in my conjecture," the man remarked, as he walked out on the pier toward the motionless form.

The woman was clad in a dingy old "water-proof" cloak, which covered her from top to toe, the hood being closely drawn over her head.

She sat with her arms resting upon her knees, her face hidden in her hands.

The clouds obscured the moon so that the newcomer could not get a good view, until he was within a yard of the woman, and then, as the moonlight struggled through the clouds, he made a discovery which surprised him.

"Hello! who are you?" he exclaimed.

The supposed woman threw off the cloak, and a stout-built man of forty or thereabouts, with a stolid, evil-looking face stood revealed.

"I am the man you are looking for, Lightning Leo, Dutch Hans Bender!" the other replied.

The moment the man threw aside the cloak, the detective—for it was indeed the celebrated man-hunter—thrust his right hand into the pocket of his sack-coat.

The man on the string-piece was quick to notice the action, and equally quick to understand what it meant.

"Oh, it is all right!" he cried. "You needn't get your barker out! I'm here to surrender, of course, and am not going to make any trouble."

"I am glad to hear that," the detective remarked, in a quiet, matter-of-fact way, yet he kept a close watch on the man, and there was a glint in his eyes which showed he anticipated trouble.

"You didn't expect to see me, did you? You expected to meet that precious wife of mine, who was going to betray her husband, and give him up to the dogs of the law!"

"Where did you get that idee?" the other asked, in a tone which seemed to say he was surprised at the supposition.

"Oh, it is the truth! I know it well enough, and you needn't try to pull the wool over my eyes, for it will not work!" the man declared, in an ugly way.

"A nice kind of a woman, to give her husband up to the man who is trying to hang him!"

"Well, if she was to do anything of the kind it would not be strange," the detective observed.

"You have tried to kill the unfortunate woman twice," he continued. "And it was not your fault, either, that you did not do the job, for you intended to, and she knew that her life was in peril if you were at liberty."

"That is because she wouldn't mind what I said," the fellow snarled.

"Yes, you wanted to make a thief out of her; wanted to make her as bad as yourself, and when she would not stoop to crime you beat her half to death!" Lightning Leo exclaimed, in stern accents.

"What do you s'pose I ever married the weak fool for, if not to help me make a living?"

"She was willing to work her fingers to the bone in any honest toil, but she would not steal for you," the detective rejoined.

"Oh, no, she was too much of a lady to do that!" the ruffian sneered. "I had a notion that I could break her spirit by giving her some sound beatings, but she was as obstinate as the devil, and then you got after her, and the miserable wretch made an appointment to meet you here for the purpose of giving me away. Curse her!"

"Oh, that is only your imagination!" the detective exclaimed, contemptuously.

"You bet your life it isn't!" he declared. "I came in unexpectedly and caught her right in the act of writing directions so that you would be able to nab me."

"I suspected what was up, for I was told that she had had a long talk with a Dago who pretended to be a peddler, and I came to the conclusion that the chances were big the peddler was a man about your size in disguise, so I just took her by the throat and choked the truth out of her."

"She knew that I meant what I said when I declared I would kill her if she didn't make a clean breast of it, and so she gave the whole thing away."

"Oh, she did?" said Lightning Leo in a very quiet way, but there was a look in his eyes which showed that his blood was up.

"Yes, she told me how you came in the disguise of a Dago peddler, and persuaded her to tell what she knew about me, saying that if she was wise she would do all she could to have me locked up, for she would not be able to breathe freely while I was at liberty."

"That was the truth, though, wasn't it?" the other demanded.

"I reckon that it was, for I had it in for her, anyway," the man declared with a malignant snarl.

"The woman was foolish to yield to your threats," the detective remarked.

"I threatened to kill her on the spot if she didn't, and as I had her by the throat, choking the life out of her, she believed I meant what I said."

"I told her that I had as lief kill her as not, for as you wanted me for murder anyway another one didn't matter, for if I was caught I would be apt to swing."

"And so you have come to give yourself up!" Lightning Leo remarked in a reflective way.

"Yes, that is just the kind of man I am; when I find that I am cornered I am not fool enough to try to escape. And I just jumped at this chance too to have a little talk with you."

"I don't know as you are aware of the fact, but I swore to have your life when I found that you were determined to drag me to the scaffold."

"Yes, your threats were repeated to me, but I never pay any attention to anything of that kind," the detective replied, carelessly.

"There is an old saying that threatened men live long, you know, and so far none of the

men who have sworn to have my blood have ever succeeded in doing me an injury; there has been lots of talk but no action, and yet I have hardly nailed a man without the fellow swearing that he would take my life at the first convenient opportunity, but, somehow, the game doesn't seem to work."

"You devil!" hissed the ruffian in a voice full of hatred.

Then he flashed a knife in the air and leaped straight for the detective.

He designed to take Lightning Leo by surprise, but the acute detective expected an attack from the beginning, and therefore all his senses were on the alert.

He jumped back as the ruffian leaped at him, and with a vigorous kick sent the murderous knife flying high in the air, then he caught his assailant a powerful smash on the jaw and away the fellow went reeling backward, dazed for the moment by the stroke.

Lightning Leo, swift to improve the advantage, closed in with the man, "back-heeled" him, bringing him down with a bang.

Then, with wonderful quickness, the detective snapped a pair of handcuffs upon the ruffian's wrists, and Dutch Hans, one of the worst crooks that the metropolis had ever known, was a helpless prisoner.

The moon had been half-obscured by passing clouds during the struggle, but now it shone forth bright and clear, and by its light the detective discovered a half a dozen men running up the pier.

A single glance and Lightning Leo understood what this meant.

It was the "gang" hastening to the rescue of the prisoner.

Half stunned though he was the ruffian was able to cry out for assistance.

"Come on, boys, kill the fly cop!" he cried.

"Hold your tongue or I will crush the life out of you!" exclaimed the detective, sternly, and he planted his foot upon the chest of the prostrate man, who was lying flat on his back, to give due effect to the threat.

Out came Lightning Leo's revolver.

"Six to one is big odds, but I am good for them and it will give me a fine chance to exterminate the gang!" he exclaimed.

And then he clicked the cylinder of the revolver around so as to be sure the tool was in working order.

A lucky thing it was for the bloodhound that he took this precaution or else his life would surely have paid the forfeit, for the cylinder of the pistol only moved a trifle and then stuck fast.

The best machinery in the world is certain to get out of order once in a while, and though the pistol had never failed the detective before, yet now at this critical moment it was of no more use than a common club.

"My revolver is useless and I am hemmed in by the gang!" cried Lightning Leo.

Vainly he tried to move the cylinder.

The mechanism was out of order and the pistol would not work.

"They are armed, of course, and they will make short work of me!" the detective muttered.

"If it was to be a fist fight now I would stand up against the gang, despite the odds, but as it is, to fight would only end in my being murdered in cold blood!"

The ruffians were now within a hundred yards and Lightning Leo could plainly see the moonbeams dance on the barrels of the revolvers which the crooks flourished.

"I am in for a cold bath and a long swim!" the detective cried.

"So here goes!"

And with the word the bloodhound shoved his revolver back into his pocket, then dropped into the river.

A yell of baffled rage came from the toughs.

CHAPTER V.

FRIENDS IN NEED ARE FRIENDS INDEED.

THE moment the detective turned his back upon the ruffians, and stepped on the string-piece, they guessed what he intended to do. Enraged by the thought that there was a chance of the bloodhound escaping from the trap which they had so carefully contrived, the leaders of the gang opened fire on him.

But just at the moment the fellows blazed away, Lightning Leo dropped upon his hands and knees, so the bullets whistled harmlessly over his head, and then before the gang had a chance to get another shot at him, he had disappeared over the side of the dock.

Fortune, too, favored the bold man-hunter, for just as he dropped into the river a dense

bank of clouds sailed over the face of the moon, so that when the ruffians reached the end of the dock, and peered anxiously down in search of the fugitive, it was not possible for them to see him, so dense was the darkness.

Dutch Hans had recovered his footing by the time the gang came up, and was wild with rage at the unexpected escape of the detective.

"Curse the hound of a fly cop!" he exclaimed. "I would give ten years of my life to be able to put a knife into him!"

"If he can't swim he will be done for," one of the toughs suggested.

"Ab, you kin bet yer sweet life that he kin swim like a duck!" another one of the gang exclaimed.

"All we can do is to wait until the moon comes out from under the cloud, and then, maybe, we will get a chance to put a bullet into him!" Dutch Hans cried.

"I did my best to run a knife in him, but he laid me out with a soaker on the jaw, and had the bracelets on my wrists almost before I knew what he was up to. He is jest old lightning, now, I tell yer!" the fellow continued.

Eagerly the toughs peered into the darkness, and they listened intently, hoping to hear the sound of the swimmer moving through the water, so as to be able to tell in what direction to fire.

But as Lightning Leo understood that his life depended upon his noiseless movements, he swam with the utmost caution, and as he was an expert swimmer, he was able to glide along without a splash to reveal his whereabouts to his watching enemies, so eager for his life.

The tide was half-flood, and the current a swift one, so as soon as the detective reached the water he allowed the tide to sweep him along for a few yards before he began to swim, in order to discover in what direction he had best proceed, and owing to the aid given him by the swift current he was nearly a hundred feet from pier by the time the gang reached the string-piece, so even if the moon had come out the chances were the ruffians would not be able to hit him, for the average New York rough is not noted for his marksmanship.

In the stillness of the night the words of the toughs came distinctly to the ears of the fugitive, and he laughed as he reflected how easily he had escaped from the snare which had been planned with such care.

"They will have to try again," the bloodhound murmured. "But the odds are big that I will nail some of them before they get another chance at me, and thus I will get a little satisfaction for this night's work."

By this time an idea had occurred to Dutch Hans.

"Boys, maybe this cussed fly cop is clinging to the spiles of the dock, and that is the reason why we don't hear him swimming away!" he suggested.

The rest agreed that this was probable and then they all began to examine around the ends and sides of the pier in hopes to discover the fugitive.

The words reached the ears of the swimmer, and he laughed to think how easily he had baffled pursuit.

"You may look for a dog's age, but you will not find me!" Lightning Leo muttered.

"And now as I am well out of danger I had best make a landing as soon as I can, and unless I have unusual bad luck I will have the bracelets on the wrists of some of the fellows before midnight."

Then as he turned his course so as to hit the next pier, the swish of oars came to his ears.

"Hallo! there is a boat coming, and the men are rowing with muffled oars too!" he exclaimed.

"It is either some river rats or the patrol boat!"

Lightning Leo stopped swimming and began to tread water, so as to listen with greater ease. The detective had keen ears and they stood him well on this occasion.

"There are too many oars for a thief's boat," he decided. "They seldom pull over two pair."

"It is dollars to cents that it is the patrol boat, and if I can succeed in attracting their attention, without the gang on the dock catching on to my game, the chances are great I will be able to nab some of the ruffians before they can get off the dock."

Fortune again stood the friend of the bold man-hunter, for it was the police boat, and the craft came straight on in a direct line for the swimmer who had been swept by the tide further out into the stream than he supposed.

"Hist, patrol boat, hold up!" said the detective, in a cautious tone. "Back water and take

me on board—Tom Leo, Headquarters detective! Make no noise for there is a gang near."

The police boat was within twenty feet of the speaker, and although the sergeant was amazed by this voice, coming from the depths of the river apparently, yet he quickly obeyed the injunction.

Lightning Leo quickly, yet quietly, clambered on board and soon explained the situation.

"Oho! it would be a rare joke if we could bag the gang," the sergeant remarked, after he had given orders to row in to the shore.

Lightning Leo had suggested that by pulling in and making a landing between the piers they would have a chance to intercept the gang when they left the dock.

The scheme would be sure to succeed if the toughs remained on the pier long enough to give the officers a chance to cut them off.

"We are all right if the moon doesn't come out," the sergeant whispered to the detective.

"If it does though our cake will be all dough!" Lightning Leo remarked.

"If the fellows once got an idea that the patrol boat is in the neighborhood the way they will clear out will be a caution," the detective continued.

"Well, I hope they will not get onto the racket for I would like to gather them in," the sergeant declared.

"We have not struck anything so far to-night," the officer added. "Although when I overhauled a boat awhile ago up the river I thought I was going to get onto something, but it was only a flash in the pan."

"No good, eh?" the bloodhound questioned.

"Not worth a cent! and it was a kind of a mysterious affair, too."

"You know Porgy Jim?"

"Oh, yes," Lightning Leo replied. "I run across him once in a while."

This was true enough, considering that the hawk had acted as a stool-pigeon for the detective for nearly a year, now betraying his crooked pals, and carrying any information of value which came to his knowledge immediately to Lightning Leo, but the man-hunter did not think it necessary to reveal this fact to the sergeant.

"Well, Porgy Jim was in the boat, pulling up-stream, and when I overhauled him he told a cock-and-bull story about being ordered to take exercise on the river by his doctor."

"I don't doubt that Jim would be apt to take almost anything that he could get his hands on if he thought there was a chance to get away with it, but exercise is a thing he would not be apt to trouble," Lightning Leo observed, sarcastically.

"The circumstance has bothered me considerably, for I don't know what to make of it," the sergeant remarked.

"I never knew Jim to be mixed up with any river business," he continued. "But this little affair to-night makes me suspect that he is going into something of that kind."

"You know Black Aaron has always had the reputation of being at the back of one of these river-rat gangs, and when I overhauled Porgy Jim he wasn't very far from the old Jew's place, and heading directly for it, too."

"He was up to some mischief, no doubt," Lightning remarked, carelessly.

It was one of the peculiar characteristics of this successful man-hunter to always keep his business to himself as much as possible, and so he was careful not to allow the sergeant to see that he took great interest in Porgy Jim's movements.

"What was the fellow up to?" he muttered, under his teeth. "This movement is one that he has not spoken to me about, but he may, in time; the affair may not be ripe yet, but if he does not speak then, it shows that there must be something wrong, and I must look into the matter."

By this time the boat was within twenty feet of the dock—they had run in between two of the piers to the shore line—and to the disgust of the bloodhounds, out came the moon, flooding the scene with light.

The gang discovered the patrol boat immediately, and at once suspected that the blue-coats were making for the shore with the idea of heading them off.

"The cops, the cops, cheese it!" they yelled, and then they started for the street, running at the top of their speed.

It was a question now whether the toughs would be able to make their escape from the pier before the policemen could reach the entrance of the dock.

Both roughs and officers strained every nerve, but as the policemen had to make a landing, and

the climbing up the side of the dock delayed them, the gang reached the street just as the sergeant and Lightning Leo mounted the string-piece.

The detective had borrowed a revolver from one of the men who was obliged to remain in charge of the boat, and when he saw that it would not be possible for them to capture the ruffians, he exclaimed:

"I will try a shot, and see if I can't wing my man!"

Owing to his being hampered with the handcuffs, Dutch Hans had not been able to run as fast as the rest, and he was the last man to leave the dock.

Lightning Leo took careful aim, and just as the ruffian turned into the street he fired.

The aim was a true one, and down came Dutch Hans with a bullet in his leg.

The sound of the shot lent wings to the rest, and they ran like greyhounds.

"No use of wasting time in trying to catch those lads," the officer growled in disgust.

"They are first-class sprinters, every man-jack of them, and we are not in it!"

"Dutch Hans is nailed, though, so I am satisfied!" Lightning Leo exclaimed.

CHAPTER VI.

THE ENGLISH COMEDIAN.

In her apartment in one of the theatrical boarding-houses, fronting on Washington Square, sat Marian Mortimer, a pretty, blue-eyed, blonde-haired actress, who was playing in the burlesque at Niblo's Theater.

One of the servants came with the intelligence that a gentleman in the parlor desired to see her.

When the young actress entered the room, she found there a young man with a very red face, fringed by a shock of crispy, curling, yellow hair, dressed in a loud plaid suit, and wearing an unmistakable English look.

"Glad to see you, Miss Mortimer, don't yer know!" he exclaimed, with an elaborate bow.

"I presume you remember me: Harry Smithers, the English comedian—met you at Chicago."

"Well, really, I think you have the advantage of me," she replied with a puzzled air. "I do not remember ever meeting you, although I must admit that there is something about your face which seems to be very familiar."

"Little things of this kind do slip one's memory once in a while," he observed.

"Please take a chair, for I have something particular to say to you, and permit me to close the door so that our conversation will not be overheard," he continued, shutting the door carefully as he spoke.

The young actress seated herself, very much perplexed; the stranger took a chair close by her side and said:

"I will proceed right to business at once. I come on behalf of the detective, Tom Leo."

"Oh, yes!" ejaculated the actress, quickly. "a know you now in spite of your disguise!"

"You must not think you can deceive the girl who is so deeply indebted to you!"

"Three times have you interfered at a critical moment to save me from my enemies, and the feeling of gratitude is so deeply implanted in my heart that it has quickened all my senses as far as you are concerned, and I do not believe that it is possible for you to assume a disguise so complete that I would not be able to recognize you."

The stranger smiled pleasantly.

"Well, we will not discuss the subject," he remarked. "My name is Harry Smithers, and I am the English comedian whom you met in Chicago. I mentioned the detective's name so that you might know that you can trust me."

"I do fully trust you!" the young actress declared.

"Did you see the *Herald* of yesterday?"

"No."

Mr. Smithers produced a copy, and called her attention to the two personal advertisements containing the name of Benhaven.

"If you recall the circumstances attending the attempt to force you into a marriage with your cousin, Ruthven, you will remember that when the conspirators were foiled and your uncle, Philip Benhaven, who is now known as Old Socks, was questioned in regard to the statement he had made that if you would submit to be guided by him he could put you in the way of getting a lot of money, he responded that it was all a lie on his part."

"Yes, I remember."

"I did not believe his assertion, for I knew the man well enough to be sure that he would

not bother himself about you if he had not hoped to profit by it, and so I put the advertisement in."

"It was a happy thought," the young actress observed.

"But when I saw the other, asking for information of Marian Benhaven, I didn't wait for the parties to call on me but went to see them."

The girl nodded; she was paying the closest attention to the recital.

"The affair had been placed in the hands of a private detective firm, who were rather inclined to ride the high horse, but when they found that I would not do any business until I was brought face to face with the principal, they made a virtue of necessity and carried me to him."

"You acted very wisely, I think."

"I do not believe in doing business with an agent when it is possible to get at the principal," the other declared.

"The agent is always inclined to throw obstacles in the way, so as to magnify his own importance; the more difficulties he raises, the more there is for him to settle, and the greater will be his pay."

"Yes, that is reasonable."

"The principal in this case is a wealthy up-town gamester named Martin O'Neil, who bears so good a reputation that he is universally known as the Square Sport."

"Yes, I have heard of him," Marian remarked.

"Some of the gentlemen of the company were speaking about him in the greenroom the other night, and they said he was a very king among the sporting men of the country."

"That is true. As a rule these sports are a pretty tough lot, but this man could not bear a better reputation if he was a bank president."

"When I saw him I came at once to business. I said that Marian Benhaven, Richard Benhaven's daughter, was in New York, and I could produce her at an hour's notice," the Englishman continued.

"And what did he say to that?" the young actress asked, eagerly.

"Expressed himself as being extremely glad to hear it, and said he had been searching for you for the better part of a year, employing private detectives."

"Strange that they did not find me!" the girl observed.

"I have not been hiding away, for there was n't any reason why I should seek concealment," she added.

"Yes, I understand that," the Englishman replied. "But when you went on the stage you took another name, and that little circumstance rendered it impossible for the detectives to find you, and then, really, the majority of these private detective concerns do not amount to much. It is very seldom indeed that they succeed in doing any good work."

"But to return to the subject. I found the Square Sport to be a careful, thorough-going business man, and after I had explained that certain circumstances had occurred which led me to suppose there might be some property coming to Richard Benhaven's daughter, and the fact had caused me to put the advertisement in the *Herald*, he asked if I was certain I could prove to his satisfaction that the person I represented was indeed the daughter of the old sport, Richard Benhaven."

"Then, in order that I should thoroughly understand the matter, he repeated, 'You must satisfy me, you conprehend, that everything is all right. You will not have to deal with lawyers or judges, no legal vultures or sharks, only myself.'"

"Yes, I see."

"And now, the question is, can you produce the proof?"

"Oh, yes, without any trouble," the young actress replied, immediately.

"That is lucky!"

"I have my mother's marriage-certificate, the record of my own baptism, letters which my father wrote to my mother after she left him, and a statement drawn out by my mother, wherein all the particulars of her marriage, my birth, and how she came to separate from my father are set down, together with a minute description of myself, in which are set down certain birthmarks which I possess, so that I can be easily identified. This document is drawn up in the form of an affidavit, properly sworn to, and witnessed."

"Well, as affairs have turned out, it was a wise precaution."

"My mother was a most excellent business woman. She always, too, had an idea that my father might leave some money when he died, and she wished the matter arranged so that if he

did leave any property, I would not have any difficulty in proving that I was the rightful heir."

"It is fortunate that matters are in such a state," the Englishman observed.

"How long will it take you to get these documents?"

"Oh, I always carry them on my person, wrapped in oil-silk. As I haven't any safe place to put them, I thought it would be best to keep them with me," Marian explained.

"You acted prudently, I think," the gentleman declared.

"So I can produce them at any time."

"I told Mr. O'Neil that I thought the proofs would be forthcoming all right, but I was not certain about how long it would take to get at them, and he responded that he would be ready to receive me at any time, and as this is a matter where nothing can be gained by delay, we will go and see the gentleman at once, if you haven't any objection."

"Oh, no: I will be ready in a few moments if you will have the kindness to wait."

"Certainly."

The young actress departed, but in ten minutes' time returned, dressed for the street, and the two set out.

CHAPTER VII.

THE TRUST.

THOSE of our readers who have perused the first novel of the Lightning Leo series will readily recall Mart O'Neil, the Square Sport, and his magnificent club-house on one of the upper cross-town streets near Broadway.

To this palace-like mansion Harry Smithers conducted the young actress.

Precaution had become a second nature to the man, and so as he escorted the lady up the steps he cast a careless glance around.

There were a number of people in the street, but nothing suspicious about any of them, and then, just by accident, the hawk-eyed observer happened to glance across the street, and in a third story window he caught sight of a well-dressed gentleman, whose features and complexion betrayed that he was of Hebrew descent, smoking a cigar, and gazing down into the street.

He would not have taken any particular notice of this man if the party had not immediately looked in another direction when he saw the Englishman's gaze turned his way.

Smithers affected not to notice the man, going on up the steps and pulling the bell.

His suspicions though had been excited by the movement the stranger had made.

"A 'plant' for a thousand dollars," he muttered. "The fellow is a 'shadow,' and has been set to watch O'Neil's house, and now the question is, who arranged the affair, and for whom does he watch?"

"To my thinking it is a hundred dollars to a cent that Miss Marian here is the game he is after."

"It cannot be any regular police business, for the Square Sport's pull is too strong for him to be troubled, and then, too, no watch would be put on the house in the daytime."

"It is dollars to cents that the two men—this girl's own blood relations—who put up the job on her before, are after her again."

"They suspect that O'Neil has got money to which the girl is entitled, and they are anxious to see if the two will come together."

"It means mischief, anyhow, and I must keep my eyes open."

"The pair escaped when I nailed them before because the girl was unwilling to prosecute them, and on account of their being her relatives."

"If they try another game perhaps I may be able to get them in such a position so that I can put them through a course of sprouts, whether the girl be willing, or unwilling, to appear against them."

The detective's meditations were interrupted by the opening of the door.

The negro recognized the Englishman immediately.

"Please walk in, sab," he said.

Then he conducted the pair to the library, where the master of the mansion, who, with his magnificent physique, looked more like a retired banker than the owner of a gaming establishment, received them with the utmost politeness.

"This is the lady," Smithers said, after they had taken seats: "Miss Marian Benhaven. Miss Benhaven is an actress, and upon going on the stage she changed her name, which is the reason why the private detectives whom you employed were not able to find her."

"Yes, I understand; a simple little circum-

stance, but it proved to be an unsurmountable barrier to my men."

"Miss Benhaven has the documents to prove her identity, and if you will look over them I think you will come to the conclusion that she is the party you wish to find," Smithers observed.

Marian produced the papers, and the Square Sport gave them a careful inspection.

"The evidence seems to be conclusive," he said, when he had finished.

"As I explained to this gentleman I am judge and jury in this case, and if I am satisfied the matter is settled.

"Of course, the mere fact that this lady is in possession of these documents does not prove that she is the person she pretends to be," the Englishman exclaimed.

"Papers of this kind can be, and have been stolen, but, if you will notice, there is a description of Miss Marian given, and certain birth-marks alluded to, particularly two small moles under the right chin, and you can see yourself that this young lady has the marks."

"Oh, yes, I am perfectly satisfied that this lady is the person she represents herself to be," O'Neil asserted.

"I have lived some years in this world and flatter myself that I am a pretty good judge of human nature," the Square Sport continued.

"At all events I have never yet made any great mistakes in that line, as far as I know, and from the young lady's appearance I am satisfied that she would not knowingly become a party to any deception."

"Thank you, sir, I am very much obliged to you for your good opinion," the young actress remarked, with a slight blush and a graceful bow.

"It is not an idle compliment, I assure you, Miss Benhaven," O'Neil remarked, as he folded the papers and returned them to the girl.

"I am a very plain, straight-forward man and generally speak my mind pretty freely," he continued.

"Your father and I were great friends, our intimacy continued for years, and yet Dick Benhaven was a man who was generally rated as being very hard to get along with; but, somehow, he and I seemed to hit it off together, and I can truly say that we never had a quarrel, but as much as we were together I did not know anything about his married life."

"Of course, all I know about the matter is what my mother said," the girl remarked. "And she was very bitter against her husband."

"Well, I should not be surprised if she was in the right," O'Neil said, slowly.

"Benhaven had a very bad temper, and was generally engaged in a quarrel with somebody; in fact it was an old joke that Dick Benhaven was never happy if he wasn't in trouble."

"But, as I said, he and I got along first rate together, and we were sitting talking in this very room when his death-stroke came."

"There was not the slightest warning that anything was the matter."

"Suddenly he stopped talking and put his hand on his heart."

"What is the trouble? don't you feel well?" I asked, noticing that he had suddenly grown pale.

"No, I don't," he replied. "I don't know what is the matter but it is as much as I can do to breathe. I am afraid that I am about done for."

"Nonsense!" I cried.

"I mean what I say, I feel as if I had a warning that I am not long for this world. I had an attack like this last night and I took it as a warning that I had better put my house in order," he continued.

"Oh, you are worth a dozen dead men!" I exclaimed.

"I do not feel so sure of that," he replied.

"Then he took out an envelope."

"In this," he said, "you will find instructions how to get at my money. I have done well during the last ten years; about everything that I touched seemed to turn to gold, and I have saved up a nice little plum; now, if I should die suddenly, I want you to take charge of the money, and—"

"At this point his breath seemed to fail him all of a sudden—he gasped once or twice, then laid back in his chair and closed his eyes, as though he was going to sleep."

"I waited for a few moments, and then, as he did not stir, I took him by the hand; he was dead."

The voice of the Square Sport had grown deep and pathetic, and the young actress heaved a deep sigh at the end of the recital.

"Yes, death had come as quietly and unex-

pected as a thief in the night," O'Neil continued.

"I rung for assistance, had him properly cared for, and the regular officers notified, then I proceeded to examine the package which he had given me."

"Your father was an extremely odd and peculiar man about a great many things," he said, addressing his conversation directly to the girl.

"For a man who was in active business life he had some strange hobbies."

"He hated lawyers, and he had no faith in either bankers or banks, and so when I read his instructions how to get at his money, I was not surprised to find that he had hidden his wealth away, just as any old recluse of a miser would be apt to do, with the exception of a few thousand dollars, his working capital, so to speak, which he had in a safe deposit company, but he had taken the vault under an assumed name—he was a queer hand for crooked work of that kind—and inclosed in the packet was the key, and full directions so I could get the money."

"What a mysterious affair!" the girl exclaimed.

"Yes, it rather discounts anything that I ever had anything to do with," O'Neil declared.

"I have examined the cash-box in the safe deposit company, and the money is there, all right, but in regard to the big sum I have no certain knowledge, but I have no doubt that when we come to look we will find it exactly according to the description."

"And I am ready to go with you to make the examination whenever you are ready," O'Neil said, in conclusion.

The Englishman looked inquiringly at the young actress.

"You had better make the arrangements," she said.

"Will we have far to go?" Smithers asked.

"Oh, no, only a mile or so from here. An hour will suffice for the examination."

"There is no hurry, you know," the Square Sport continued. "As the treasure has stayed where it is in safety ever since the death of Benhaven, it is not likely that a day or two's delay now will make any difference."

"Suppose we make an appointment for tomorrow afternoon—at two o'clock, say?" O'Neil suggested.

"That will suit me," Marian remarked.

"Yes, that will do nicely," the Englishman assented.

And so it was arranged that the two were to meet the Square Sport at the corner of Fourth avenue and Twenty-third street at two o'clock on the following afternoon.

Then the pair departed, O'Neil escorting them to the door with courtly politeness.

As they descended the steps Smithers cast a careless glance at the house opposite.

The gentleman with the prominent nose and Jewish cast of features had disappeared.

"Unless I am greatly mistaken I shall see that party before we have gone a block," the Englishman muttered.

The young actress was decidedly impressed by the gentlemanly bearing of the Square Sport, and confided to the comedian that she was greatly amazed to find such a man pursuing the life of a gambler.

"You will find all these first-class sporting men to be men of good-breeding," Smithers remarked.

"If they were not educated and well-bred they could not get along," he explained. "The men who visit the resorts kept by such sports as this O'Neil are high-toned fellows, and they would not patronize any low, common place, so when you meet men of the class to which this sport belongs you depend upon their being jolly good fellows, and as square in their dealings as the average business man."

By this time they had reached Broadway.

Smithers was on the alert, although he did not seem to be paying any particular attention to what was going on around him, and, as he had surmised, the hawk-faced gentleman was lounging on the corner, puffing at his cigar.

"I presume you do not care to have me escort you home?" the Englishman said.

"Oh, no, I will not put you to that trouble," Marian replied.

"This next car will carry me nearly home. I am ever so much obliged to you; good-day!"

Smithers bowed in return, the young actress boarded the car and was carried away.

CHAPTER VIII.

HOOKING THE FISH.

THE comedian watched the car for a few moments until it was almost hidden by the passing

vehicles and then he muttered, as he drew a cigar from his pocket and lit it:

"Now then unless I have made a great mistake, my friend with the big nose will sail in to get a chance for his white alley:

The tall man had been watching Smithers with the eye of a hawk, and when the Englishman got his cigar going he threw away his own "weed," although it was only half consumed, drew another from his pocket, advanced to Smithers and said:

"I beg your pardon, will you have the kindness to oblige me with a light?"

"Certainly! most happy to do so," Smithers responded with great affability.

And then the Englishman, after taking a good view of the stranger's face, exclaimed:

"Bless me! haven't I seen you before somewhere?"

The hawk-nose man was taken by surprise, for he had calculated upon trying a game of this kind himself.

"Well, yes, I think so; I was just going to say that your voice seems familiar to me."

"I'm Harry Smithers of Niblo's Garden Theater," the Englishman explained.

"Ah, yes, I thought I knew you—I met you in London, didn't I, about a year ago?" and then the hawk-nosed gentleman shook hands with the actor, displaying as much warmth as though he had been the dearest friend he had in the world.

"Yes, yes! why, my dear fellow, I felt sure I had met you somewhere, but I can't for the life of me recall your name, don't yer know?"

"Jackson—Captain Morris Jackson!" responded the other, throwing back his shoulders and endeavoring to assume a military air.

"Ah, yes, I knew that you wasn't a stranger, but I couldn't remember the particulars of our meeting, but then you see that is a failing of mine; following a public life, as I do, I meet so many people that it is a clear impossibility for me to remember all about them."

"I generally manage to keep their faces in my mind, don'tcherknow, but that is about all I can do."

"Yes, under the circumstances, it would be a wonder if you did remember."

"But now that you have mentioned your name, I recall the fact that I have met you, perfectly well, and, my dear fellow, I assure you that it gives me the greatest pleasure to see you here in New York," and Smithers again grasped the hand of the other, shaking it warmly.

"You see, my dear captain, when I meet an old friend from across the water in this country, it seems to bring back dear old 'Lunnun' to me right away!"

"Will you have a drink?"

"Well, thank you, I don't care if I do take a glass of ale," the captain replied.

Although an old stager in the rascally art of "roping in," yet the hawk-nosed man had never met with such an easy victim, and he did not exactly know what to make of it.

He was one of the most successful "bunco-steerers" in the country, and particularly noted for the ease and grace with which he gained the confidence of entire strangers by pretending to be the relative of some noted man with whom he fancied the victims to be acquainted.

The first point in the game, though, was for a confederate to find out the name and address of the man who was to be "roped in."

Then, by means of a directory containing the names of bank officers and prominent lawyers throughout the country, it was an easy matter to pretend to be a relation of one of the public men of the victim's own town.

On this occasion, though, the bunco chief was working single-handed, and so he expected it would be a difficult task for him to win the confidence of the Englishman.

Therefore when the actor fairly tumbled into the trap the captain really felt some reluctance to go on with the game.

"He is such a blessed, innocent flat!" the hawk-nosed man murmured as he followed the actor into the saloon.

"Really now such a blooming sucker ought not to be allowed to run at large, without a keeper, for the dullest crook that ever tried his hand at the bunco game would not find it difficult to land this fish and skin him for all he is worth."

In the saloon the pair had their ale, and then the captain insisted upon treating.

"By the way that was Miss Mortimer you were with, wasn't it?" the captain asked, carelessly.

"Ah, yes, and a splendid girl she is too!"

Smithers declared, warmly. "Got the making of a great actress in her too, don'tcherknow!"

"Yes, I should judge so. I have seen her several times, and was much impressed by her beauty and talents."

"Oh, she will surely make a great actress if she remains on the stage, but there is a doubt about that, you know."

"Ah, indeed?"

"Yes, yes, really, she has the most romantic history don'tcherknow, make a magnificent novel! If I had any talent in the author line I think I should write it up myself."

"You astonish me!" the captain declared, and at the same time the thought came to him that in all his experience he had never encountered a softer flat than this talkative actor.

"Yes, really about the most remarkable personal history that I think I ever heard!" Smithers declared.

"I will tell you all about it if you care to hear."

"Yes, I should, for although I have no personal acquaintance with the lady yet I take a great interest in her from seeing her on the stage."

"That is natural, of course. It is quite a little story but it will not take me long to tell it," Smithers declared, assuming an air of great importance.

Then he happened, just by accident as it seemed, to glance at the clock over the bar.

"Hello! I had no idea it was so late!" the actor exclaimed.

Then he consulted his watch.

"Yes, it is so, no mistake about it, and I have an important engagement at my rooms in ten minutes."

"I have furnished apartments just a few blocks away, and if you don't mind I would be pleased to have you pay me a visit."

"I can promise you a good cigar, and some extra good bottled Bass's ale, far superior to this sort of stuff which they sell over the bar, and which is not at all like what we get at home, you know."

"Why, certainly; I shall be delighted to go!" the captain responded, inwardly chuckling at the resemblance which this invitation bore to the one which he usually extended to his victims.

After gaining their confidence he always said he had some business to attend to, and when the stranger accompanied him, usually succeeded in roping him into a little game whereby the man was despoiled of his valuables.

"Now, if I didn't know that this was all on the square, I should suspect that this fool of an actor was going to try some bunco game on me," the captain murmured, as he followed Smithers from the saloon.

"I will reserve the story until we are seated in my den, with a good cigar between our teeth, and the bottles of Bass on the table," the actor remarked.

"A good idea," the captain declared, with an approving nod. "The street is no place for a recital."

Smithers conducted his companion to one of the small cross-streets on the east side of the city.

"This is where I have my den," he remarked, as he halted at the door of an old-fashioned, two-storied brick house. "So much more comfortable, you know, than staying at a hotel or boarding-house."

"Yes, yes," assented the other.

Smithers opened the door by means of a latch-key and ushered the captain into the entry, allowing him to take the advance, but when the actor closed the door the pair were plunged in utter darkness.

"Oh, upon my word! this is really dreadful!" Smithers exclaimed, angrily.

"That stupid fool of a girl has closed the shutters again! She did the same thing the other day, and I asked her then if she wanted me to break my neck in the darkness, the deuced donkey!"

"Just stay where you are a moment, my dear fellow, and I will light the gas!"

"All right."

The captain had advanced a couple of yards from the door, and was standing with his back to it.

No suspicion of danger had he, and therefore his surprise was great at being suddenly "garroted" in the most scientific manner.

A strong arm was thrown around his neck, drawing him violently backward against his assailant's breast, and then a handkerchief, saturated with chloroform, was applied to his nostrils.

He struggled for a few moments to free himself from the grip of iron, then his senses reeled, and all was blank.

CHAPTER IX. ON THE RACK.

THE trapper had been entrapped in the most complete manner.

When the captain recovered his senses, he found himself in a sitting position in a corner of what was evidently a cellar, for the walls were stone, damp with moisture, while the ceiling was rough boards, with the beams showing.

The floor was earth, and in the center of the narrow apartment stood a barrel, upon which a lighted candle was placed.

Smithers sat on a keg by the barrel, with his eyes fixed upon the captain's face in an inquiring way.

The bunco chief was profoundly astonished. Never in all his experience had he been treated to a surprise party of this kind.

He was a helpless prisoner, for both wrists and ankles were bound with a strong cord, and when the captain surveyed the lashings, he comprehended that there was no chance for him to break them.

"How are you now, all right?" the actor asked in the most matter-of-fact way possible, just as if nothing out of the common had occurred.

"What the deuce does this mean?" the captain cried in a rage.

"Don't understand it, eh?" Smithers queried.

"No, I do not, but I can assure you that if this outrage is intended for a joke I will take care to make it a mighty costly one for you."

"Oh, come, take it easy!" the actor suggested. "There isn't any use of your kicking up a row! You are in the toils, don'tcherknow, and you might as well make the best of it."

"Upon my word! I begin to believe you are crazy!" the captain exclaimed, amazed by the coolness of the other.

"Well, if I am you will find that there is a deal of method in my madness, as the fellow says in the play," Smithers retorted.

"See here now, I don't propose to bandy words with you!" the other cried, angrily.

"This is no joking matter! And I can tell you that I am the kind of man who will not rest satisfied until this outrage is avenged."

"What do you mean by this attack? Don't you know that this is a mighty serious affair? You must be out of your senses to try a game of this sort on a man like myself!"

"Take off these cords immediately or I will cry out for assistance, and the first thing you know you will be in the hands of the police and on the way to the station-house."

The actor did not seem to be at all worried by this threat for he only shook his head and remarked:

"Oh, no, you will not give any alarm."

"Yes, I will!" the other retorted. "What do you take me for—a fool? Do you think I am the kind of man to stand any nonsense of this kind?"

"I don't doubt that you will try to do the trick, but you will not be able to accomplish it, for although you may yell at the top of your lungs yet you will not be able to make anybody hear you," Smithers replied.

The captain stared at the actor for a moment as though he had doubts in regard to the truth of this statement.

"Oh, I am giving it to you perfectly straight, my dear fellow!" the Englishman exclaimed.

"As it happens, all the circumstances are in my favor," he continued. "We are alone in the house. The elderly couple who own the place, and from whom I rent my rooms, have gone off into the country, and will not be back for a week; this is a sub-cellar, well underground, so that though you may shout as loudly as you can, there is no chance for you to attract the attention of anybody in the street."

The captain glared at the speaker, his face dark with rage, and what added fuel to his anger was the fact that he was utterly in the dark as to why the Englishman had gone to the trouble of entrapping him.

"You see, my dear fellow, you are really in a deuce of a scrape, and there isn't any two ways about it," Smithers remarked in a careless manner which galled the confidence man. "And if you are wise you will not attempt to kick up any row."

The captain reflected upon the matter for a few moments.

He was one of those kind of fellows who believed with ancient Solomon that all men are liars, and it was his notion that no one would speak the truth if a lie would serve the purpose better.

But in spite of his strong opinion on the subject, he had an idea that the Englishman was speaking the truth when he said it would be useless for him to waste time in attempting to give an alarm.

In spite of all his smartness he had been caught in a trap, and as he could not see any way, just at present, by means of which he could escape, he came to the conclusion that it would be wise for him to take matters as easily as possible, and the first thing on the programme was to find out why the Englishman had gone to the trouble of insnaring him.

"This is about the meanest trick that I ever had played on me!" the captain declared, indignantly. "And I would be much obliged if you will explain just what your little game is."

"Oh, yes, but before I do that I will have to trouble you to explain just what *your* little game is," the actor replied.

"My little game!" exclaimed the other, pretending to be vastly astonished.

"That is what I said," Smithers remarked, placidly.

"What gave you the idea that I was trying to work any game?" the captain demanded, appearing to be profoundly amazed.

"Oh, come, now, old fellow, what is the use of beating around the bush and wasting time in this manner?" the Englishman asked.

"If you think you can humbug me by pretending that you were not up to some game, I can tell you right at the beginning that you can not do it!" Smithers declared, sharply.

"I am no flat, you know. I cut my eye teeth an extremely long time ago, and the man who succeeds in getting the best of me will have to rise pretty early in the morning."

"Now then, although I have no doubt that you are a very sharp fellow, yet you are not sharp enough to make a donkey out of me," the Englishman continued.

"And I hope you will have sense enough to see that, when I tell you that I *know* you have been playing the spy upon Miss Mortimer and myself," he added.

"You were watching us from a window on the opposite side of the way when we entered a certain house, and when we came out you were waiting on the corner."

"It was my idea that you intended to speak to me upon the first convenient opportunity, and so I lingered on the corner in order to give you a chance, and I must say that you were quick to improve it."

"You took the bait without any trouble and I did not have any difficulty in hooking you."

A scowl appeared on the captain's face as he listened to this assertion.

The actor was quick to notice the expression.

"Ah, my dear fellow, there isn't any use of looking glum about the matter, you know!" he asserted.

"It is the truth, and all the scowls in the world will not alter the fact."

"It wasn't any trouble at all for me to get you in the toils, for being so busy looking out for the snare which you were preparing for me, you didn't take heed that you were walking into a pitfall yourself until it was too late to escape," Smithers remarked in a self-satisfied way.

"Circumstances were all in my favor. A blooming tooth has worried me for the last few days and I had a vial of chloroform to doctor it with in my pocket, and the brilliant idea came to me to work the game just as I did."

"I did you the justice to comprehend, you know, that you were a sharp from Sharperville, as these Americans say, and I understood, right in the beginning, that I could not hope to get anything out of you unless I got you in such a position that you would be obliged to speak."

"Oh! you are an extremely sharp fellow!" the captain declared in an ugly way.

"Well, I wasn't born yesterday, don'tcherknow!" Smithers observed, complacently.

"I fancy that you have got this matter arranged to your complete satisfaction," the other remarked with a malicious grin.

"Well, yes, I don't see how I could improve the state of affairs in any way."

"And you have taken all this trouble because you got the notion into your head that I was watching you and Miss Mortimer?"

"Exactly! and I was curious to know who it was that had put you on our track, for I jumped to the conclusion immediately, you know, that you wasn't doing it on your own hook."

"Ah, yes, I see. You certainly are an extremely smart fellow!" and the captain gave utterance to a scornful laugh.

"And you think because you have got me in

a tight place here that I will make a clean breast of all I know?"

"My dear fellow, you have hit it!" Smithers replied. "That is the precise calculation that I have made."

"Did you ever hear the old saying that though it only takes one man to lead a horse to the water, forty can't make the beast drink if he doesn't wish to."

"Oh, yes, I am familiar with that ancient proverb, but I can assure you, my dear fellow, that it does not fit your case at all."

"I think you will find that it does before you are many minutes older!" the captain declared, sullenly.

"Oh, no, you are away out in that calculation," Smithers replied with a good-natured smile.

"I feel sure that you will tell me what I want to know."

The other surveyed the Englishman for a moment, evidently puzzled by the confidence he displayed, and then he shook his head.

"You never made a bigger mistake in your life!" Jackson exclaimed.

"In the first place you are wrong in your surmise that anybody set me on to watch you; no such arrangement has been made, and furthermore, I can tell you that if I was a party to any such game you could keep me here until I rotted before I would squeal on my pals."

"Aha, captain, my dear fellow, you are just the kind of man I like to meet!" Smithers declared warmly.

"It does me proud to entertain a true blue chap like yourself," he continued. "And I shall be pleased to keep an eye on you just for the purpose of seeing how long you can hold out."

"How long I can hold out?" the other exclaimed, evidently in doubt in regard to the Englishman's meaning.

"Yes, that is what I said," the other replied.

"You don't suppose that I am fool enough to let you go, you know, just because you have declared that you are not going to peach on your pals?"

"Oh, no!" he continued, with a decided shake of the head. "I am not quite so silly as to take your word for that, after having gone to the trouble of getting you into my power."

"I have got you in a position where I can put the screws on without any trouble and I intend to do it."

"Put the screws on?" cried the captain, a shade of alarm appearing on his face.

The bunco man was an expert operator, as keen-witted a rascal as could be found in all New York, but he had never been noted for his personal courage, and when confronted by a danger such as now threatened him, was apt to become "rattled," as the saying is.

"Yes, put the screws on in a way which you will find to be extremely unpleasant, I fancy!" the Englishman declared.

"You are here, completely helpless in my power, and though you were twice as cunning as you are, it is not possible for you to make your escape."

"You can get out simply by making a clean breast of it, and that is the only way."

"I am not such a fool as I look by a long shot," Smithers continued. "And when I get a man in my power, I generally go in to settle him as completely as I can."

"I know there is a game on foot, but whether it is directed against me or Miss Mortimer is a mystery, and that mystery I am going to get to the bottom of as soon as possible."

"If you are obstinate, and will not give me the information that I require, I shall take away the light and leave you here in solitude and darkness to meditate in regard to the matter, and as I am inclined to be merciless in an affair of this kind I shall not trouble myself to provide you with either food or drink until you make up your mind to do as I wish."

"You will not be without company, you know," the Englishman added, "for the place is infested with rats and I have no doubt some of them will pay you a visit to help pass the time away."

Then Smithers rose and advanced to the lighted candle.

CHAPTER X.

A CONFESSION.

THE face of the entrapped man had grown deadly pale.

Up to this time he had consoled himself by the hope that he would be able, by means of bluster and brag, to get the Englishman to release him.

He had not a particularly good opinion of the "actor chap," despite the shrewd manner in which the other had led him into the snare.

But now he comprehended that the Englishman was thoroughly in earnest, and had determined to put the screws on him to the best of his ability.

His soul was appalled by the prospect before him.

Hunger and thirst were bad enough, but to remain in this dismal hole, exposed to the attacks of the rats, was even worse, and so the bunco man "weakened," to use the slang of the day.

"Hold on!" he cried. "What are you going to do?"

"Take the light and depart, so as to give you a good chance to see what the horrors of the dark cell are like," Smithers replied.

"Is there no other way to arrange the matter than for me to make a confession?" the captain asked, in a sullen way.

"No, that is the only course open to you."

"You have got me foul, and so I suppose I will have to make a clean breast of it!" the confidence-man exclaimed.

The Englishman resumed his seat.

"You are quite right; you are in a deuce of a hole, and there isn't but one way for you to get out of it," Smithers remarked.

"And by the way, let me caution you to tell the truth in this matter," he continued.

"Don't give way to the delusion that you can pull the wool over my eyes by means of some cleverly devised falsehood, for I can tell you, right in the beginning, that I am a remarkably well-posted man, and I will be sure to catch you if you attempt any trick of that kind."

Now, strange as it may appear, the words of the actor had a great influence upon the captain, and although under other circumstances he would have been certain to set them down for a bit of brag, yet as circumstances were he judged that it would be wisest for him to tell the truth, rather than to attempt to lie out of the scrape.

"Oh, I will give it to you straight!" the captain declared. "Although I will tell you before we begin that you will not be able to get much information out of the matter."

"If you tell me all you know, it will not be your fault if I don't," Smithers remarked in his easy, careless way.

"And, by the by, I will take this opportunity of saying to you that if your disclosure does give me any information, I shall take care to keep the fact of how I became possessed of it to myself, so you can speak freely, and without fear that your pals may attempt to take vengeance upon you for betraying them."

"Much obliged, although, really, I don't believe you can make head nor tail out of the thing after you hear all I have to say."

"Go ahead and give me an opportunity to judge," the Englishman said.

"You ain't the game—Miss Mortimer is the party," the captain asserted.

"Yes, I am not surprised by that statement, for I had an idea that it was that way."

"I haven't any enemies that I know of, and, consequently, there isn't any reason why anybody should trouble their heads about me."

"Just at present I am a little down in my luck—a little hard up, you understand—and so ready to take any chance to make a dollar in an honest way."

"Ah, yes, of course!" Smithers exclaimed, in a sympathetic tone.

"During the past year I have done a little work in the 'shadowing' line for a private detective concern on Broadway, and as some of my acquaintances know about this business, I suppose that is how I happened to be picked out for this job."

"Yes, yes; but come down to particulars. Who was it made the arrangement with you, and where was it made? Commence right at the beginning, you know."

"I will. I heard about the job last night from an acquaintance of mine who keeps a saloon on the east side of town."

"What's his name?"

"Smidt."

"Aha! that is Black Aaron!" was the thought that came into Smithers's brain.

"Smidt, eh?" he said aloud.

"Yes, I stepped in there to get a drink, and he asked me if I hadn't done the shadow act, and when I said I had, he told me that Mike Owney, who runs a saloon in Houston street, had told him down-town that if he knew of a good man up in the shadow business to send him to his place."

"Then this Smidt really didn't have any-

thing to do with the affair?" Smithers observed in a thoughtful way.

"No, nor Owney either for that matter, for the thing was this way: a stranger came into Owney's place, and, in a casual conversation, said he wanted a man to do a little shadowing. Owney mentioned it to Black Aaron—"

"Eh? Who is Black Aaron?" the Englishman inquired.

"I meant Smidt—that was a slip of the tongue," the captain explained.

"Ah, yes, yes."

"Smidt spoke to me and I went to Owney's."

"I understand."

"And there I saw the party."

"What was he like?"

"A young fellow, twenty-five or thirty, maybe," the other replied. "Dark hair and eyes, and looks like a sport."

"There are plenty of men in the city who would answer that description," the other observed.

"That is true, but I can't give you the name of the party for I don't know it, and that is the honest truth now I assure you!" the captain declared.

"I am not doubting you; your story seems to be all straight so far."

"Oh, it is, I give you my word on it!" the other declared.

"I did not ask the man's name," the captain continued. "It wasn't any of my business, and if I had put the question the odds are big that he would not have given me his right name so I should not have gained any information."

"That conclusion is a natural one, it seems to me," Smithers remarked.

"He came right down to business and asked me if I knew Miss Mortimer, the actress, who was playing at Niblo's Garden Theater."

"Well, did you?"

"I had seen her on the stage, but I told him that I wasn't sure whether I would know the girl if I met her in the street, for some of the actresses when they are off the stage look very different from what they do when they are behind the footlights."

"In this case that isn't true, for Miss Mortimer looks just the same off the stage as she does when on it."

"Yes, that is what he said, and then he made a bargain with me to shadow the girl if she went to a certain house."

"And in order to carry out the agreement you took a room opposite?"

"Exactly! that is just the little game I played."

"What were the instructions in regard to the shadowing?"

"If I detected the girl entering the house I was to wait outside and when she came out if she was accompanied by any one I was to follow the party and find out all I could about him."

"Ah, yes, I see, and that was why you fastened onto me."

"Yes, I was obeying orders."

"And where were you to meet your principal to make your report?"

"At Owney's saloon."

"Well, I don't see that this affair concerns me at all," the actor remarked in a reflective way.

"No, it does not, only that this party is anxious apparently to find out all he can about the men who go with the girl, for when he gave me my instructions he told me that it was probable the girl would be accompanied by a man, rather than by a woman."

"It looks to me as if this fellow has fallen in love with the girl and was anxious to find out if he had any rivals."

"Yes, it does seem to be a case of that kind," the captain replied.

"It certainly looks like it, but as far as I am concerned the man need not trouble himself," Smithers declared. "I am not in love with the girl, and it was just by accident that I happened to escort her up-town. She is a stranger in New York, so is not acquainted with the city, and when she spoke to me about having a call to make up-town and asked how she should go, I offered to escort her as I hadn't anything in particular to do."

"Yes, I see."

"And when I detected you doing this little bit of shadow business I immediately jumped to the conclusion that there was a deal of mischief on foot."

"I have given it to you as straight as string!" the captain exclaimed.

"Oh, yes, I have not a doubt of it, and it has taken a weight off my mind to find the affair does not amount to anything."

"And, by the way, you need not mention this

little episode unless you wish to," the Englishman added.

"You can depend upon my keeping quiet about it," Smithers continued. "I am not the kind of a fellow to go around blowing trumpets."

The captain looked relieved as he listened to this declaration.

"It is nothing to me, you understand, if a dozen of the young men about town fall in love with Miss Mortimer; she is a jolly nice girl, and all that, but I am not a ladies' man at all, and so will have to be counted out."

"When you make your report, you know, you can simply say that you made my acquaintance without any difficulty, and discovered I was merely acting as the lady's escort, having no more idea of why she went to this particular house than if I had been a thousand miles away."

"That is all right!" the captain declared. "You can rest assured that I am not anxious to tell anybody how neatly you trapped me."

"And to think of my taking all this trouble for nothing!" the Englishman exclaimed. "But, somehow, I got the idea in my head that it was going to turn out to be an extremely serious case, and so I went in to get at the rights of the matter as soon as possible."

Then the actor released the captain from his bonds, conducted him to the street door, and ushered him out.

"Good-by, dear boy, don't bear any malice, I beg!" Smithers exclaimed, as the other departed.

CHAPTER XI.

THE DETECTIVE'S SUSPICIONS.

AFTER the captain departed the host, who had so cleverly entrapped the bunco-sharp, proceeded to the neatly furnished little front parlor, took possession of a rocking-chair, and began to deliberate upon the situation.

Of course, by this time, it is probable that the careful reader has suspected that the English actor, Harry Smithers, was not what he appeared to be, and that he was the detective, Lightning Leo, in disguise, which is the truth.

"Now, let me see just how this case stands," the man-hunter mused.

"The statement of Jackson brings Black Aaron into the affair, but he is away off in his notions that the old Jew hasn't any interest in the business, for he is not the kind of man to trouble his head about a matter of the kind unless he was going to make something out of it."

"The captain did not have any suspicions as to who I really was, and had no suspicions that I knew all about him, so he thought he could fool me by stating that he had been in the shadowing business for a private detective concern, but all the shadowing he ever did was in the bunco business, when he and his pals spotted a man whom they believed would prove to be a pigeon worth the plucking."

The young man who hired the bunco sharp to watch the girl will turn out to be Kenneth Ruthven, I fancy, and Old Socks is, probably, somewhere in the background.

"Both of them are keen-witted fellows, and they undoubtedly suspect that the girl's father, Dick Benhaven, left a good bit of money, and that was the reason why they were so anxious to get her into their power."

"They made a failure in their first attempt, thanks to my interference, but fellows of their stamp have a good deal of the bloodhound in them and they are apt to stick to the game if they think there is a chance for them to land a big stake."

"Porgy Jim was on the river in the neighborhood of Black Aaron's place," the detective murmured, thoughtfully, as the statement of the officer came to his mind.

"Is he the link which connects the conspirators and Black Aaron?"

"Upon my word it looks like it. He and Black Aaron have always been on intimate terms, and as the affair is a big one to handle, the chances are great that through Porgy Jim the old Jew has been induced to take a hand in the scheme."

"And now how about my stool pigeon?" the detective asked, shaking his head in a doubtful way as he spoke.

"Is he nursing this affair to a head so as to enhance his own importance when he comes to reveal the matter, or has the bigness of the prospective boodle dazzled his eyes and caused him to conclude that he can make more money by sticking to crooked work than by betraying the conspirators to me?"

"It looks like it, and, somehow, the impres-

sion has come to me that in this case Porgy Jim is going to play me false, but if he does I fancy that before the affair is ended the fellow will rue the moment when he came to such a decision."

"He will bear watching and I must attend to his case at once."

Then the man-hunter proceeded to the apartment in the rear of the parlor, where he slept, and in which was a closet containing a complete assortment of disguises.

The detective speedily changed from the Englishman's garb into a shabby dark suit, put on a brown short-haired wig, and when thus transformed presented the appearance of one of the young toughs who are to be found hanging around the corner in the neighborhood of the liquor stores after nightfall.

"Now then the first thing I must do is to take a look at Mike Owney's Saloon and see if any of the parties whom I suspect are making it their headquarters."

Acting on the idea, the disguised detective proceeded to Houston street.

The saloon to which he was bound had a bad reputation, and the police of the precinct declared that it was nothing more or less than a house of call for thieves.

But as the proprietor was always careful to keep good order, and would not allow any thefts to be committed in the saloon itself, the authorities had no excuse to shut the place up.

Lightning Leo, a thorough New York boy, could play the part of a young tough to the life, and as he lounged into the saloon, swaggered up to the bar and called for a drink of beer, the keenest-eyed rascal would never have suspected that he was anything but what he appeared to be.

After drinking half of his beer the disguised man-hunter allowed his eyes to wander carelessly around the room.

The saloon was a large one, and in the rear part were tables and chairs for the accommodation of card-parties.

There were about a dozen men in the place, drinking beer, chatting together or playing cards, and in the further corner sat a group of four men who attracted the attention of the detective immediately.

The detective chuckled to himself as his eyes fell upon the group.

"Oh," he murmured, "there is Old Socks, and better dressed too than I have seen him for a long time."

"I suppose he thinks that as there is a chance for him to come in for a good bit of money he ought to spruce up a bit."

Then the detective turned his attention to the fourth man, who at the first glance he took to be a stranger, but after a brief inspection he decided to the contrary.

"I haven't seen you for a long while, and you have changed a great deal," Lightning Leo muttered. "But I have not forgotten you, my fine fellow; Chuck Minson is your name, and you used to be Black Aaron's right hand man."

"Your presence here in consultation with these two schemers shows that I am right in my suspicion that the old Jew has gone into the affair."

"I suppose Chuck's little game was to shadow the girl while the captain looked after me."

"Porgy Jim is not to the fore though, and I wonder at it."

Then in a careless way the disguised detective turned to the bartender and said:

"I was expecting to meet a friend of mine here, see? but he ain't showed up; maybe you know him, Porgy Jim?"

"Oh, yes, I know him, but he don't hang out 'round here; I hav'n't see him in a dog's age," the bartender replied.

"Is that so?" the bloodhound exclaimed, in well affected astonishment. "Why, I kinder had an idea that this was his stamping-ground."

"Well, he did use to come here, but he and the boss had a growl a while ago and he ain't been in here much since."

"He won't be likely to show up then to-night?"

"No, I don't believe he will, 'cos as I sed, he ain't in the habit of coming in here now."

"I will have to hunt him up then," and with the remark the man-hunter departed.

"It is just as well that I did not succeed in finding Jim in Owney's place," the detective murmured, as he took his way to the Bowery, the great east side street, which is noted for being the highway where more crooks can be encountered than anywhere else in the great metropolis.

"I should have had to reveal myself to him, in order to have a talk with the fellow, and if he intends to play me false his suspicions might

have been aroused at finding me in the saloon where the plotters meet."

"If he means to betray me he will be apt to keep out of my way, for Jim is a chicken-hearted rascal and is not the man to try a bluff game."

"If he does play me false I must do my best to give him a lesson which he will not be apt to forget this side of the grave, but if he gets the idea into his head that I have a suspicion that he is playing the traitor it will render the job of trapping him infinitely more difficult."

By the time the detective reached this conclusion he had turned into the Bowery and before he had gone half a block came face to face with Porgy Jim.

He immediately accosted the man.

"Hello, Jim, you are just the fellow I wanted to see!" Lightning Leo exclaimed.

For a moment the hawker was startled, and he stared at the disguised detective, but as the man-hunter had spoken in his natural tones, without any attempt to disguise his voice, the other was able to recognize him.

"Well, blow me tight!" Porgy Jim cried in profound astonishment. "If this here get up of yours don't beat anything I ever see'd!"

"Yes, I flatter myself that it is pretty good."

"You kin jist bet your sweet life that it is!" the hawker declared, emphatically.

"Why, I would never have known you in the world if you hadn't hailed me."

"Where are you bound?"

"Nowhere in particular. I did a tidy stroke of business this morning in the clam line, and as it was too late when I got through to hunt up any thing else I thought I would knock around town for awhile."

"Ah, yes, I see. By the way, I was talking with Sergeant O'Toole a short time ago, and he happened to let fall a remark about meeting you on the river in a boat last night."

"That is so, but I wasn't up to anything wrong I give you my word!" the hawker declared, earnestly.

"You are not going into the river-rat line, eh?" the detective inquired, sharply.

"Oh, no, I hain't the least idee of doing any-thing of the kind!" Porgy Jim declared.

"The sergeant was a little suspicious, as he said he couldn't get any satisfaction out of you, as you told him a cock-and-bull story about being ordered by your doctor to take exercise on the water."

The hawker grinned.

"I never lose a chance to guy a cop!" he declared.

"It was none of his business what I was doing," he continued. "The sergeant never was smart enuff to catch me in no scrape, anyway, and when he undertook to cross-examine me, I jest went in to have some fun with him."

"What were you doing out on the river?"

Porgy Jim laughed.

"Well, if you must know, I was after some eels, and they allers bite better at night, you know, but I wouldn't gratify O'Toole enuff to let on to him."

"I thought that it was strange if you were going in with the river gang," Lightning Leo observed.

"Well, if anything turns up, don't neglect to warn me. It will be money in your pocket, Jim, to keep in with a man about my size," and then the detective went on down the Bowery.

CHAPTER XII.

THE WOMAN INTERFERES.

PORGY JIM nodded to Lightning Leo as he departed, and then went on up the street, but there was a cloud on his face, and he shook his head in a sober way.

Soon his thoughts found vent in words, quietly muttered to himself as he walked slowly along.

"I don't kinder like the looks of things," he murmured.

"What Leo said about it's being money in my pocket for me to keep in with him sounded mighty like a warning."

"The detective is a quiet bloke, and he would be apt to speak in jest that way, if he had a suspicion I was going to try the 'cross' on him."

"But how can he suspect that I am going to throw him over?" the hawker exclaimed, abruptly.

"It ain't possible," he continued. "My being out on the river in a boat don't amount to anything."

"Of course the detective is no fool, and he thinks I was up to something; but as he ain't a fortune-teller, it isn't possible for him to tumble to the game I was arter."

By this time the hawker had reached the corner of the street in which he lived and with a

moody brow he turned and proceeded to his home.

Porgy Jim had a wife and two children and lived in three miserable rooms in the top story of one of the vile tenement-houses which disgrace the east side of the metropolis.

The hawker's wife was an under-sized, sallow-faced woman with sharp features and red hair. A woman who possessed considerable temper too if one could judge by her expression.

The rooms were poorly furnished, everything being of the cheapest description.

"Where are the kids?" Porgy Jim asked as he took a seat.

"Playing down in the street; they can get a breath of fresh air there which is more than they can do in this miserable hole!" the woman exclaimed in shrill tones.

"Well, it ain't as nice as it might be, but what am I going to do?" Porgy Jim replied, sullenly.

"I ain't no Jay Gould or Vanderbilt for to give you and the kids a brown stone front in the avenue; I wish I was, but as I ain't I have to do the best I kin."

"Well, I know that, Jim, I ain't a-finding any fault with you," the wife responded. "I know that you do your level best, but it is my notion that sometimes you make some mighty big mistakes."

"Oh, I s'pose I do," the hawker admitted. "Awful few men are there in the world who don't. But, what are you driving at, anyway?"

"You know Neddy Flynn who lives next door?" the wife asked.

"Yes, one of the smartest all-around cracksmen that there is in New York."

"He has been playing in hard luck for a long time, you know."

"Yes, it has been as much as he could do to keep body and soul together. He came out of jail about six months ago, and since that time the detectives have kept so close a watch on him that he has not had a chance to do a good stroke of business."

"He has made a raise at last, eight or ten thousand dollars, all at one lick, and they have salted the money down in a farm, so that Mrs. Flynn and the kids will be all right, no matter what happens to Neddy. She is from the country, you know, just like myself."

"Well, I am glad to hear of Neddy's good fortune, and I hope he has been wise enuff to have the thing fixed so that if at some time in future the detectives nail the men who did the job they will not be able to git the farm away."

"Oh, they have got that fixed all right!" the woman asserted. "If the 'gaft is blown' on Neddy and his pals they will not be able to prove that a dollar of the money which bought the farm came from Neddy, so Mrs. Flynn and the kids won't have to worry in the future."

"That is good, but what has this got to do with me?" Porgy Jim demanded.

"I know you of old, Peggy, I know that you have got some idee in your head or else you wouldn't come at me in this way."

"You know what I think about your being mixed up with the detective?"

"Oh, yes, I understand all about that," the man replied impatiently.

"You think I am mighty foolish for standing in with the detective, and you reckon that I could make a heap more money if I didn't have anything to do with him."

"One thing is certain, Jim, and that is as long as you are satisfied to play stool-pigeon to him, you never will make any big raise—you never will get your fingers on eight or ten thousand dollars same as Neddy Flynn has!" the woman declared in a very positive way.

"Well, as far as that goes, I ain't Neddy Flynn, nohow, you know," the hawker replied. "He is a first-class cracksmen and I ain't. I can't hold a candle to him when it comes to a big job, and so there ain't much chance for me to strike a big stake."

"Jim, you ain't acting honest with me in this thing!" the wife declared, sharply.

"You can't fool me, you know, for I have known you too long."

"You have got something on your mind, and it has been worriting you; you have been talking in your sleep and muttering about a big stake, and what a fine chance there was to pull it off, and a lot of stuff of that kind."

"Well, I ain't a-going to deny that there is a little game on foot, and if the coves who are working the trick succeed in getting it through all right, they will get hold of a good bit of cash."

"And are you in the deal?" the wife inquired, anxiously.

"Yes, so far I am."

"And if the job succeeds, what will you be able to collar—anything worth having?"

"Five or six thousand, mebbe," Porgy Jim replied, lowering his voice and glancing around him as though he was afraid that the very walls had ears.

"What! you don't mean it?" the woman exclaimed in profound amazement.

"Yes, that is honest. If the job goes through all right, the coves will collar from seventy to a hundred thousand dollars, and although there will be considerable of a mob to come in on the divvy, yet it is pretty certain that, as I will have a good deal to do with putting the thing through, I will get a good big slice."

"Oh, if we could only collar any such sum of money as that!" the woman exclaimed, her eyes sparkling with delight.

"It would be a big thing for us, eh?"

"You bet your sweet life it would!" the wife declared.

"And we could go and git a place down in the country, jest the same as the Flyns."

"But I ain't no farmer," Porgy Jim urged.

"Tain't necessary that you should be. I kin do what little farming there is to be done on a small place, and we must git near to some big town on the water where you could go and peddle your fish and clams jest the same as you do here."

"That ain't a bad idee," the husband observed, slowly.

"Why, it is jest elegant!" the woman declared, full of enthusiasm. "Jest think of getting ourselves and the kids out of this miserable hole; and then you wouldn't have to do any more crooked work."

"That is a big pint!" Porgy Jim observed.

"Oh, yes, there isn't any mistake about that," the wife assented.

"I tell you what it is, Jim, this crook's life ain't what it is cracked to be," she continued, in a serious way.

"You had better believe I know that!"

"Jest look back and see what has become of the men who have followed it for the last ten years."

"The most of them are either dead or gitting free board at the State's expense up at Sing Sing."

"That is just as true as you live!" the woman exclaimed, emphatically.

"There isn't hardly one out of twenty who has been able to git away with anything," she added. "Most of them manage to win a big stake every now and then, but the money don't seem to do 'em any good."

"That is a fact."

"You see, the trouble is that they don't go in to salt the boodle down," the wife explained. "They get the money all right, but they don't keep it. It is easy got, easy gone, the old story, you know; the next haul they will put away, they say, and then the next time the trick don't work, they get pinched by the detectives, and there they are!"

"You have got the thing down fine!" the hawker exclaimed, in a tone of admiration.

"Now then, s'pose you collar even two or three thousand dollars, or say five hundred, to put the thing right down low, then you hand the money over to me, and I will skip down in the country to my old dad and git him to buy a farm for us, then you could give the go-by to a crooked life, and you could walk the streets without being afraid of being nabbed by some fly-cop."

"I would be a mighty sight easier in my mind!" Porgy Jim declared, drawing a long breath.

"Well, I should smile!" the wife declared.

"There is the danger, though, that the thing won't go through," the man observed.

"You have got to risk that, of course. Money don't lay around in the streets waiting for somebody to come along and pick it up."

"S'pose you blow the gaft about this game to the detective—what will he give you?" the woman asked, abruptly.

"Oh, I don't know. Not a great deal."

"Fifty or a hundred dollars?"

"Nary time! ten, or maybe, twenty at the outside."

"And how much will you get out of him in a year, s'posed you do your level best to help him all you kin?"

"Not more than a couple of hundred, anyway," the hawker replied.

"And yet in this one pull you stand a chance to rake in a thousand or two?"

"Yes, if the thing goes through I am almost certain to make a couple of thousand chucks at the least."

"Don't be a fool then and give the trick away to the fly-cop!" the woman cried. "And if you pull through all right we are made for life!"

"I will do it—durn me if I don't!" Porgy Jim exclaimed with an air of firm determination.

"You are right! I would be a fool to give the snap away for a ten dollar note when by keeping mum and going on I stand a chance to make a big stake!"

The wife cried out in glee at this determination.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE QUEST.

PROMPTLY at the appointed time came Miss Mortimer accompanied by the English comedian, Harry Smithers—as long as the detective masquerades in that disguise we judge that it is expedient to speak of him as though he was really the man he represented himself to be.

The Square Sport was ready and announced that he was prepared to set forth immediately.

"It is only a few blocks and we can walk to the house in ten minutes," O'Neil remarked.

"If that is the case under ordinary circumstances we would not need a carriage," Smithers observed. "But as matters stand just at present I think that it will be wise for us to take certain precautions."

"Yes?" the sport remarked in a questioning tone, evidently surprised.

"It is my impression that certain parties, anticipating that Miss Mortimer is going to inherit a large sum of money from her father's estate, have set a watch upon her," the Englishman explained.

"Is it possible?" O'Neil asked.

"I do not think there is a doubt about the matter," Smithers replied.

"And I have no hesitation, either, in telling you who these parties are," the actor continued, "for it is not the first time the pair have attempted to enrich themselves at Miss Mortimer's expense."

The young actress looked fully as surprised at this revelation as the Square Sport.

"Is it possible that you think there is danger of any one troubling themselves so far as to plot against me?" she exclaimed.

"In my opinion there is a strong probability that the pair who tried so hard to get you into their power before, will not be apt to give over the chase until they are fully satisfied that they do not stand any chance to make anything."

"I am amazed!" the young actress declared. "I did not wish to prosecute them when they attacked me before, because I am a firm believer in the old saying, that 'blood is thicker than water,' and I fancied, too, that if I extended mercy to them, they would be content to keep away and trouble me no more."

Smithers shook his head.

"Ah, my dear young lady, some men are like brutes, kindness is entirely thrown away upon them," he explained.

"All they understand is force," he continued. "And the harder they are pounded the greater becomes their respect for the party who administers the punishment."

"These two men, who are doing their best to get a chance to rob Miss Mortimer of any money that she may get from her dead father's estate, are her uncle, Philip Benhaven, who is a vile rascal, well known to the police by the name of Old Socks, and her cousin, a sporting man called Kenneth Ruthven."

"Yes, I know Ruthven, but I hadn't any idea that Dick Benhaven had a brother living," O'Neil remarked.

"He is an old scoundrel who has led a crooked life for years, and few people know who he really is," Smithers explained.

"In regard to Ruthven, I have known him for some years, and have always considered him to be a pretty square sort of a fellow," the veteran sport observed, thoughtfully.

"I know he has a suspicion that Dick Benhaven left a good bit of money, and he believed too that the cash was in my keeping for he came to me and said that as he was the next of kin to the dead man he thought he was entitled to his wealth, but knowing as I did that Benhaven had a daughter I quickly undeceived him on that point."

"The two men plotted to get Miss Mortimer into their power, with the object, of course, of getting at the money. The attempt was not a success, but despite that, and the fact that the lady had mercy on them when they were helpless, and she could have had them severely punished if she had cared to seek revenge, I think from certain circumstances that have come to my knowledge the pair are still in hopes by hook or by crook to get hold of some of this

money, and it is my impression that spies have been employed to shadow Miss Mortimer."

The Square Sport surveyed Smithers with considerable amazement during this speech, for the matter-of-fact, business-like way in which he explained the case produced a strong impression upon the veteran sport.

O'Neil was an excellent judge of character and he saw that Smithers was a man of uncommon ability.

"In that case it would be advisable to adopt precautions so as to throw the shadows off the track," the Square Sport observed.

"That is my idea, and I have taken measures so that if an attempt is made to follow us we will be able to baffle the trackers," the actor declared.

"A most excellent idea!" O'Neil assented.

"And in a case of this kind too there is a deal of satisfaction in getting the best of men who try to play that kind of a game," the Square Sport continued.

"Oh, yes, that is worth considering, of course, and I must admit that I too take a keen pleasure in getting the best of such rascals," Smithers observed.

"As you have got your plans arranged you had better take command of the party," the veteran sport suggested. "Here is the address." And drawing a card from his pocket O'Neil penciled a line upon it, then handed the pasteboard to the Englishman.

"It is a small and rather obscure street on the west side," O'Neil added.

"Yes, I am acquainted with the location," Smithers remarked as he read the address. "And now suppose we start."

"I will keep my eyes open in order to see if I can detect the shadows," O'Neil observed as the three left the house.

"Whether you will be able to detect them or not depends a good deal upon the style of men who are employed to do the work," the Englishman responded.

"If they are first-class hands, well up in their business, it will not be an easy matter to spot them, although the knowledge that such a game is likely to be worked is a great assistance."

"That is true," O'Neil asserted.

"I am going to take you by a roundabout way," Smithers warned. "And in order to baffle the watchers I have a two-seated buggy, with a trotter attached, in waiting for us at a certain quiet by-street. The rig stands near the corner, which we will turn to get into the street."

"That is a capital idea!" O'Neil declared.

"The shadows will not be able to keep nearer than a hundred feet of us, no matter how skillful they may be," Smithers explained.

"We turn the corner, jump into the buggy and off we go," he continued. "By the time that the spies get into the street. We will be at the next corner: we whisk around that, go another block or so and then turn again."

"I see, I see!" the Square Sport exclaimed. "By working the game in this way the watchers will be completely thrown off the track."

"Yes, and from the fact too that we use a carriage it will look as if we were going on a long trip."

"Exactly! that is the impression that we wish to give."

Smithers took the party toward the avenue running parallel with Broadway, and as the three went on, the Square Sport and the young actress kept their eyes upon the people in the street, anxious to see if they could succeed in discovering the shadows.

But if they were watched the spies performed their work so well that it was impossible for the pair to detect them.

But after the party turned into the avenue Smithers got his eyes on a couple of men who appeared to pay more attention to their movements than was warranted by the circumstances.

"There are my gentlemen, I think," the disguised man-hunter muttered.

"They appear to understand their business too, but how extremely disgusted they will be when I spring this surprise upon them, and they find that I have given them the slip in spite of all their care and trouble."

Two blocks up the avenue the three went and then turned into a side street.

A handsome, two-seated buggy, to which a powerful roan trotter was hitched, stood by the curbstone, about twenty feet from the corner, with an intelligent looking groom at the head of the horse.

"You take the back seat, please, Miss Mortimer!" Smithers exclaimed hastily, as he assisted the young actress into the carriage.

Then he and O'Neil mounted to the front seat, the groom gave the horse his head as Smithers took up the reins, and away went the animal in a fine burst of speed.

The shadows—for the two men whom Smithers had spotted were indeed spies—turned the corner just in time to see the powerful trotter whirl the light buggy around into Broadway, and as the three whom they were following so closely, were not visible in the street the pair immediately came to the conclusion that they were in the buggy.

"The jig is up!" exclaimed the first shadow.

"You bet!" responded the second.

"'Twas a mighty cunning trick!"

"Yes, and we don't stand no more chance to track them than if they were a lot of birds."

"You are right! And even if we had a boss and buggy too the odds are big that we couldn't keep them in sight after they had got such a start as this," the other fellow declared.

"That is sure enough! After a carriage gets into Broadway, with a block or so start, it is a smart man who can keep the rig in sight."

The two spies were completely baffled and all they could do under the circumstances was to return to their employer and report results.

Smithers drove on at a good pace, went up Broadway for a couple of blocks, then drove through a cross street into Third avenue, down which he proceeded until he came to Tenth street.

Through Tenth street he went toward the North River, and when he came to the neighborhood of the locality indicated by the address he doubled on his track twice in order to be sure that he had not been followed by any shadows in a carriage.

This was a needless precaution though for he had completely outwitted the spies.

Then happening to come across a stable he discharged his passengers and made arrangements to have the rig cared for until he returned.

After this the three proceeded on foot.

"This house to which we are bound was owned by your father, and occupied by him, for the last ten years," O'Neil explained to the young actress. "But he kept the fact a profound secret and even I had no knowledge of it."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE TREASURE.

"AND it is strange too when you consider that I was about the only friend your father possessed, and I flattered myself that I was familiar with all his affairs, but never for a moment did I suspect he owned any property in New York," the Square Sport continued.

"In many respects your father was a remarkably odd man," O'Neil added. "And although he was keen and active in business yet he took odd fits and delighted to get away by himself; so this little house in an obscure street afforded him the solitude which he craved."

"I presume you understand, my dear young lady, that in a big city like New York it is possible for a man who loves to be alone to realize his wish better than in any place excepting some wide desert."

"In the metropolis people do not trouble themselves about their neighbors, and men live side by side for years without even knowing each other's names."

"Yes, I am aware that the majority of the city people have too much business of their own to occupy their attention to permit them to bother their heads about their neighbors," the young actress remarked.

"Here we are," said the veteran sport at this point, halting at the door of a small, two-storied brick house, which had evidently been built a great many years, so old-fashioned was it.

The three entered, and O'Neil called the attention of the others to the fact that the door was cased inside with sheet iron all around the lock in order to bid defiance to the burglar's tools.

The veteran sport led the way to the cellar, having first provided himself with a lamp. The underground apartment was just a common, ordinary cellar.

"It would be a wise man indeed who would suspect that a treasure was concealed in this place," O'Neil observed.

"Very true, for there isn't anything here but bare walls," Smithers remarked.

"When your father confided his secret to me, just before his death, I was rather inclined to think that his mind was wandering," the Square Sport assented. "But after ascertaining that he really did own this house, and had occupied it for years, I came to the conclusion that he knew what he was talking about, and I would

be apt to find everything to be just as he had said."

The others nodded assent.

"This rough stone wall is apparently solid," O'Neil continued, as by the aid of the lamp he began to examine the front wall of the cellar. "But appearances are often deceptive. The instructions are to commence at the right hand corner of the front wall, count three stones from the ground, and then three stones in a straight line to the left, insert the blade of a strong knife in the crack and pry out the stone."

The veteran sport performed the operation as he spoke, and as the last word came from his mouth the stone swung out from its place disclosing a cavity in which stood a small iron safe.

It was one of the old-fashioned kind which are opened by a key.

"Really now I must say that I think this is one of the most admirable hiding-places for a man to stow away valuables that has ever come to my knowledge!" O'Neil declared, as he put his hand in his pocket to produce the key.

"Unless a thief was gifted with supernatural smartness he would never suspect that a treasure was hidden away in such a place as this," the veteran sport continued.

"And then in the event of the house taking fire there would not be any danger of harm coming to the contents of the safe."

"The man who devised this scheme had brains—no doubt about that!" Smithers declared.

The young actress nodded assent, looking on with wondering eyes.

O'Neil opened the safe.

Within it was a parcel, wrapped up in oiled silk.

The Square Sport requested the Englishman to hold the lamp while he opened the package.

It contained fifty United States bonds, one thousand dollars each.

"This is not quite as much as I expected," O'Neil observed, after he completed his count. "I had an idea that your father was worth somewhere in the neighborhood of a hundred thousand dollars; but I am not particularly surprised to find that I am mistaken, for a man's gains, and his wealth, are almost always exaggerated."

"I do not suppose that you will complain, though, at the sum, even though it is not as much as I expected," the veteran sport observed with a smile, as he tendered the bonds to Miss Mortimer.

She hesitated to take them.

"It does not seem possible that all this money can be for me!" she declared.

"Do not trouble yourself about that. You are your father's daughter, and his sole heir," O'Neil replied.

"The money rightly belongs to you, and you should not hesitate to take it, even if it comes in this quiet, unassuming way, without having to pay toll to a half dozen legal gentlemen."

"You are entitled to the money surely enough," the disguised detective remarked. "And there isn't any doubt in my mind that you will make a much better use of it than your father ever did."

"I am of that opinion, too," O'Neil assented. "And as far as your claim to the money goes, no one else in the world has the least right to it, and you should not hesitate to take the wealth."

"Yes, you are right, and I am foolish to hesitate because it does not come to me through the law courts," the young actress remarked, as she took the bonds which the sport had wrapped up for her in the oiled silk.

"This wealth makes me independent," she continued. "And I can assure you, gentlemen, I shall try to do some good with it."

Then a sudden idea occurred to O'Neil: he consulted his watch.

"Half-past four," he said. "It is too late to place the bonds in any institution for safe keeping, so you will have to keep them until the morning, but as no one will have any suspicion that you possess such a treasure, you will not be apt to be troubled."

"Oh, I am not at all afraid!" the girl assented.

"Not much danger," said the Englishman carelessly.

But the speech was not a true indication of his thoughts, for in his opinion there was a strong probability that the plotters would be suspected, when their shadows related how cleverly they were outwitted, that the girl had succeeded in getting the treasure, and they would make a desperate effort to capture it.

He did not deem it prudent though to reveal this fact to the girl, but at the same time he made up his mind to place a watch upon her, and arrange a trap so as to capture the scoundrels if they made the attempt.

Having succeeded in their quest the three departed.

By the time they gained the street the man-hunter had arranged a scheme.

He considered it necessary for the successful prosecution of his plans for him assume another disguise.

Smithers, the Englishman, must disappear and a new character come upon the scene.

His reason for this change was that he feared the plotters might suspect who and what he was and so be placed upon their guard.

He did not underrate the intelligence or the cunning of the allied scoundrels, and so had made up his mind not to give away a point.

The manner in which he had entrapped the bunco man, and the dextrous manner in which the shadows had been outwitted, he thought would be certain to lead the plotters to suspect that some such man as himself had had a hand in the game, and if they once got such an idea in their heads, it would be sure to render them so cautious that it would make the task of trapping them a very difficult one, indeed.

They might suspect that Smithers, the English comedian, was not what he seemed, and therefore Smithers must vanish.

When the party reached the stable where the rig had been placed, the disguised detective requested O'Neil to drive Miss Mortimer to her boarding house, and the Square Sport responded that he would be pleased to do so.

"And, if you could make it convenient, I wish that you would take about an hour to do it," the bloodhound remarked.

O'Neil was surprised and looked at the speaker in an inquiring way.

"It will help me to carry out a little game which I am trying to work," Smithers explained.

"Miss Mortimer will tell you I can be trusted, and that I would not ask you to do anything of the kind without a good reason."

"Yes, that is true," the young actress asserted.

"All right, I will be happy to oblige you," the Square Sport responded. "I can take Miss Mortimer for a drive in Central Park, and so fill up the time."

"That will do nicely, and you will aid me greatly if you will work the game in that way."

And so the three parted.

O'Neil and Miss Mortimer drove off up town, while the disguised detective hurried to his room.

There he discarded the clothes of the Englishman, and attired himself in a plain, dark suit, put on a black-haired wig, applied a stain to his face, and when the operation was completed, ninety-nine men out of a hundred would have taken him to be a Frenchman at the first glance.

Thus disguised he made his way to the theatrical boarding-house.

The mistress of the place was a middle-aged lady, and decidedly strong-minded, so the acute detective had no hesitation in speaking frankly to her.

He explained the nature of his business, and said information had reached him that a party of rascals thinking that Miss Mortimer possessed valuables, had planned to rob her, and he wished to take up his quarters, in disguise, in the house so as to capture the scoundrels.

The landlady was not at all alarmed, taking the affair as a matter-of-course, and said she would be glad to aid him.

The bloodhound selected a hall bedroom in the front of the house, so he could command a view of the street, and which was next door to Miss Mortimer's apartment, then settled down to watch for developments.

CHAPTER XV.

IN COUNCIL.

On the east side of the metropolis, in the district bounded by East Broadway, the Bowery, First street and the arm of the sea known as the East River, is the Jewish quarter, where the children of Israel cluster almost as thickly as bees in a hive.

In this district beer saloons and small restaurants abound, and it is so thickly populated that the appearance of strangers excites no comment, for it is an utter impossibility for the dwellers

in the region to become acquainted with each other.

For this reason Black Aaron had selected a small dingy saloon in Essex street, right in the heart of the Jewish district, as a meeting-place where he might confer with his fellow conspirators.

Although Lightning Leo had calculated that the natural pride of the bunco man, the redoubtable Captain Jackson, would keep him from revealing to his employer how completely he had failed in his mission and how easily he had been duped, yet in so assuming the acute man-hunter had made a mistake.

The captain was too old a bird not to understand that his employer was engaged in some big game, or else he would not be willing to pay so liberally for the work he desired to have performed, so when he came to the old Jew he related all the particulars of his adventure with the English actor.

Black Aaron was an uncommonly acute man and he immediately jumped to the conclusion that the Englishman was not what he appeared to be.

"It is tollars to cents, my tear, that der man was a bloodhound in disguise!" he declared.

"I kind of had a suspicion that he was a fly-cop myself when he put up the job so neatly on me," the bunco man asserted.

"Do you know Lightning Leo?" the old Jew asked.

"No, not personally: I have heard of him, of course, but I never happened to come in contact with the man."

"It looks to me like his work," the old Jew remarked with a grave shake of the head. "He ish one of der kind of mans that does strange t'ings, such as der regular fly-cop would never dream of doing."

"So I have understood; he is original in his methods, and that makes him so dangerous," the captain observed.

"You understand that I would not have given the snap away if I had not been in a tight place, and from the way the fellow worked the trick, I knew that he meant business."

"Ah, yesh, but you made a big mistake, my tear, in mentioning mine name," Black Aaron declared.

"Der man could not have guessed that I vos in der game if you had not let der cat out of der bag."

"Well, I suppose that is true enough," the other admitted.

"But you must take the circumstances of the case into consideration," he urged.

"You were rattled and lost your head, eh?"

"Yes, sir, I will have to admit that you have arrived at a correct conclusion."

"The fact of the matter is, the man took me so completely by surprise, that I really blurted out more than I intended, and then, strange as it may appear to you, the thought never came to me at the time that the man was a detective officer in disguise."

"I do not t'ink dere ish a doubt about it!" the old Jew declared, emphatically.

"Neither do I, now that I come to reflect upon the matter."

"Vell, vell, dere ish no use of crying over spilt milk," Black Aaron remarked, with the air of a philosopher.

"The mischief is done, and dere is no help for it, and all we can do now ish to take measures to repair der damage."

Then the old Jew instructed the bunco man to assume a disguise which would completely change his appearance, and shadow the young actress again.

Black Aaron's next movement was to send word to Old Socks, Porgy Jim, and Ruthven, that things were not progressing as well as they might, and on no account must they come to his saloon. In the same message he designated the little beer-shop in Essex street as a meeting-place.

In the rear of the saloon was a private room and in this apartment, just at dusk, on the same day that the actress secured the treasure so mysteriously concealed by her father, Old Socks, Porgy Jim and Kenneth Ruthven waited for the coming of the old Jew.

Black Aaron had sent the plotters word to meet him at six o'clock, and although it was now nearly seven, yet they waited, for they knew the old Jew well enough to understand that he would come as soon as possible.

Just at seven Black Aaron made his appearance.

The saloon-keeper was directed to bring a fresh round of beer, and the conspirators proceeded to drink it, just as if they had met for a social chat.

"You are late," Ruthven remarked.

"Yesh, I waited to receive der report of my shadows," Black Aaron replied.

"Well, how does the game go?" Old Socks asked.

"Badly, my tears!"

The others shook their heads.

Black Aaron then related at length how his shadows had received instructions to watch the young actress, and how she had managed in company with the two men to evade the vigilance of the trackers.

The three were amazed and a grave look came over their faces.

"This here is one of the queerest rackets that I ever heered of in my time!" Porgy Jim declared.

"Yes, that is so," Old Socks assented. "And the man who put up the job in that extremely neat way has got a good, big head on his shoulders, and don't you forget it!"

"The idea of using the carriage was an extremely novel one," Ruthven remarked in a reflective way.

"Oh, yesh, no doubt about that; and do you not see, my tears, that der man who got up der scheme, suspected that der young lady would be shadowed and set his wits to work to beat der game?"

"And he succeeded too, to the queen's taste!" Porgy Jim declared.

"It was a mighty cunning scheme," Old Socks remarked. "There isn't many men able to get up a trick of that kind."

"You are right!" Black Aaron declared. "And der man who planned der job is a genius."

"I think I can name him too!" Old Socks asserted.

The others looked at him inquiringly.

"It is that infernal fly-cop Lightning Leo!" the old ruffian continued.

There was a pause, each man seeming to be busy with his thoughts, and there was a dark look on their faces, then Porgy Jim broke the silence.

"Do you really think that it was Lightning Leo who put up the job?" he asked, evidently very ill at ease.

"I would be willing to bet all the money that I can raise upon it!" Old Socks exclaimed.

"In my mind dere is very little doubt that Lightning Leo is der party," the old Jew declared.

"The detective is an uncommonly smart fellow," Ruthven observed. "And there isn't any doubt that a dodge of this kind would be right in his line."

"Yesh, yesh, that ish what I t'ink," Black Aaron remarked. "Then too did you not say that he vos de mans who interfered when you vas putting up der job on der girl before?"

"Yes, he was the chap who knocked the scheme into a cocked hat," Old Socks replied.

"He ish der mans then who worked dis trick!" Black Aaron exclaimed, decidedly. "He t'inks dere ish a game on foot and we must play our cards well or else we will not stand any chance to win."

"Oh, yes, if we have got Lightning Leo against us we can not afford to throw away any point, you let!" Old Socks declared.

"Now then, my tear fr'en's, how does dis t'ing look to you as it stands?" the old Jew inquired.

"Let me count off der points as they appear to me," he continued.

"Der girl and der Square Sport go off together in company with der man who says he ish an English actor, but who, I believe, is Lightning Leo in disguise."

"From der precautions that were taken to keep der shadows from following der party it looks as if they were going on important business."

"Yes, yes, not a doubt of it!" Old Socks declared.

The others nodded assent.

"The shadows were thrown off der track and der party went on about dere business."

"At six o'clock der Square Sport and der girl returned, but the Englishman was not with dem."

"It looks as if the party had gone after the boodle—the detective going along so as to guard against interruption," Old Socks observed.

"That is jest what it looks like!" Porgy Jim affirmed.

"Undoubtedly that is the truth," Ruthven added.

"And from der fact that der Square Sport and der girl came back mitout der detective does it not look as if they had secured der boodle?" the old Jew asked.

The three pondered over the question for a

few moments and then nodded their heads in assent.

"And as the money was got so late in der afternoon is it not probable that the girl has it mit her in der house?" Black Aaron demanded.

"The chances are big that it is so, it seems to me," Old Socks responded.

"Yes, I think the odds are big that the girl has the money in her possession," Ruthven remarked. "Both she and the Square Sport would go upon the idea that there wasn't any likelihood of anybody suspecting that she had the money, and so there was no danger of anybody attempting to get it away from her."

"In the morning though she will be apt to put it away in a safe place," Porgy Jim observed.

"Oh, yes, that is true enough!" Old Socks exclaimed.

"We have got to collar that boodle to-night or else we will not stand any show to get our claws onto it," he added.

"Mine tear fr'en's, that is shust der conclusion that I came to when der shadow made his report," the old Jew asserted.

"Our work must be done to-night or not at all."

"I reckon that you have got some scheme in your head, or else you ain't the man I take you to be!" Old Socks declared.

CHAPTER XVI.

BLACK AARON'S SCHEME.

THE old Jew chuckled in a quiet way for a few moments, and a shrewd look appeared on his face—a foxy expression, so to speak.

"Ah, my tear fr'en's, your uncle vas not born yesterday!" he declared, shaking his head in a sagacious way.

"Der moment the shadows made their report to me I set mine wits to work to devise some vay to get at der boodle to-night; for I saw at once that whatever dere was to be done must be done quickly."

"To-night is der golden time; to-morrow will be too late."

The others nodded.

"Der fly-cop, Lightning Leo, is a good man, but he is only a man, and cannot see into the future any more than we can," the old Jew continued.

"To my thinking der chances are great that he will not suspect that we think der girl has got der money, and so he will not place an extra strict watch on der house where der girl lives to-night."

"If he is a careful man—one who believes in guarding all der points—he may cause der house to be watched so that it would be difficult and dangerous for any one to attempt to crack the crib."

"It is very likely that he will take a precaution of that kind," Old Socks observed.

"From what I have seen of the man I reckon he is one of the kind who will not be apt to throw away any chances," the old fellow continued.

"So far he has beaten us at every point, and it isn't likely that he will give us a chance to take a trick now if he can help it."

This conclusion of the old ruffian seemed to be a sound one to the others, and they expressed their opinion to that effect.

"I think we may set it down as being a sure thing that the crib cannot be cracked from the outside," Black Aaron remarked.

The rest nodded assent.

"And if we make a try for der money der game must be worked from der inside."

"That is it exactly!" Old Socks exclaimed. "You hit the bull's-eye right in the center that time! The fly-cop will have his men on the outside, but if the trick is worked in the house his pals will not be able to interfere."

"Yesh, that ish v'at I thought, and so I hafe gone to work to get a couple of good men into der house," Black Aaron announced.

"Well, well, you have taken time by the forelock!" Old Socks exclaimed, thus putting into words the surprise that all three felt.

"In a case of dis kind, where quick work ish required, you vill not find your old uncle asleep!" the wily Jew declared with a grin.

"Der moment I got der report from the shadows I set mine wits to work, for, as I said before, I understood that dere wasn't any time to be lost," Black Aaron continued.

"As it happen, luck was on my side, for in mine saloon at der very time was two men who were shust der fellows that I wanted."

"Well, that certainly was fortunate!" Ruthven declared.

"It is about time that something came our way," Old Socks growled. "For it is my opin-

ion that we have been playing in the hardest kind of luck ever since we went into this game."

"That is as true as preaching!" Porgy Jim asserted. "Everything has been ag'in' us right from the start!"

"A bad beginning makes a good ending, mine tear fr'en's!" the old Jew declared.

"Mebbe it does," Old Socks observed in an extremely doubtful way. "But if I had my choice I would say let the luck start at the beginning and run right through clear to the end."

"Ah, my tear sir, we cannot always have t'ings in in dis world as we want them," the old Jew observed with the air of a philosopher.

"We must take der luck as it comes and make de best of it," Black Aaron continued.

"Who are these two coves?" Porgy Jim asked.

"Chuck Minson and Nixy Yell," the old Jew replied.

"I know both of them!" Old Socks exclaimed.

"And a pair of better all-round cracksmen can't be scared up in the country!"

"Yes, I know them too," Porgy Jim remarked. "And Old Socks here is right when he says that they are good all-around men, for it is a fact. Almost every crook has his own particular line, and he isn't good for much if he tries to do any business outside of it, but both Chuck and Nixy kin turn their hands to a dozen different things and hold their own with any bloke in the business."

"Yesh; that ish der truth," Black Aaron declared. "Dey can crack a crib as well as any burglar that ever took a trick, and on der river, mit der rats, dey are as good men as ever stepped foot in a boat."

"And they are first-class workmen in the confidence line," Old Socks added.

"Dey are shust der men we want!" the old Jew affirmed.

"Vell, my tear fr'en's, I made an arrangement with der two men, and by dis time they are at der boarding-house; dey are a couple of actors from der West, you understand, and they have come to New York to get a chance on der stage here," the old rascal chuckled, showing his yellow, fang-like teeth.

"That is a splendid lay-out!" Old Socks declared.

"Dey are good talkers and will not have any difficulty in getting into the house," the old Jew asserted. "And when dey are once in you can depend upon dem to do der trick in a first-class manner."

"It is a bully scheme!" Old Socks exclaimed. "And if they don't win the boodle it will be because the devil's own luck is in it."

"But I say it seems to me that you are putting a great temptation in the way of these two men," Ruthven observed, in a tone which showed that he considered the matter to be an extremely serious one.

"How so?" asked Black Aaron, evidently surprised by the remark.

"If the girl has got the money in her possession, the sum is sure to be a big one—somewhere in the neighborhood of a hundred thousand dollars you know," Ruthven said.

"Yesh, yesh, I understand that, of course!" the old Jew exclaimed, a little impatiently. "If we did not think we stood a chance to win a big stake we would not take all dis trouble."

"Of course, that goes without saying," Ruthven replied. "But if these two men get the money in their possession what is to prevent them from making off with it?"

"You don't take any stock in the old motto about honor among thieves," Old Socks observed.

"No, I decidedly do not—not in such a case as this," Ruthven replied.

"If two men of the stamp which I imagine these fellows to be should get an enormous sum of money in their possession it seems to me that it would be the most natural thing in the world for them to take leg bail with the cash."

"Oh, no, my tear fr'en', dere is no danger of dere doing anyt'ing so foolish!" the old Jew declared, with strong emphasis.

"If you knew me as these men know me you would understand that I hafe a long arm and a strong one," he continued.

"I know enough about the two to hang dem a dozen times, and it would take a deal of money to get either of der two to brave my anger; so, my tear sir, do not allow yourself to become alarmed about that question. If my rats are smart enough to win der boodle you can depend upon der money being brought straight to me."

Ruthven looked incredulous despite the positive way in which the old Jew spoke and perceiving this Old Socks deemed it wise to say a few words.

"You can depend upon what Aaron says," he remarked. "He knows his men and what he says to them goes, every time!"

"That's so!" Porgy Jim chimed in. "A crook would be a fool to quarrel with a man like Aaron here even if he could win a big stake by so doing, for in the long run he wouldn't make any thing by acting in that way."

"Oh, everyt'ing is all right!" the old Jew asserted. "If my rats do der trick we vill get der monish all correct."

"I hafe a fr'en' who lives in der neighborhood of der boarding-house. He keeps a saloon in Amity street, and I have arranged for my men to meet me dere after the game is worked," Black Aaron continued.

"It is an all-night house with private supper rooms in der rear, and in one of dem we can divide der boodle mitout any one being der wiser."

The others agreed that this was a good scheme and then after the old Jew gave the directions so they could find the all-night house without trouble, the party broke up, the arrangement being that they should meet in the Amity street saloon at twelve o'clock.

Old Socks, Ruthven and Porgy Jim went up the street together, the first named being in extremely good spirits, but the others looked grave and thoughtful.

"What in blazes is the matter with you two?" the old fellow asked. "Don't you think that the scheme is going through all right?"

"I have my doubts about the cracksmen," Ruthven replied. "It is all right for you to declare that there isn't any danger of their making off with the cash, if they are lucky enough to win the boodle, but I don't feel so certain in regard to the matter as you two do."

"Oh, I reckon it is all right," Porgy Jim asserted.

"I ain't a-worrying myself at all about the matter, but I have been out of sorts lately—don't feel very well you know, and that is what the matter is with me."

"It is all right partner!" Old Socks declared.

"The Jew and his men will do the trick! If the girl has got the money—and in my opinion there isn't much doubt but what she has got the cash—the cracksmen will be sure to get it, and, in fact, I feel just about as easy about the matter as though the money was in sight now."

"Well, I don't, and I will not believe that the game is going through all right until I see the money with my own eyes," Ruthven asserted.

"You are a doubting Thomas, but you will see, and handle, the ducats before you are many hours older," Old Socks responded.

Then Porgy Jim suddenly remembered that he had a little business to which he must attend, and he departed, leaving the others to go on in company.

The hawker had told the truth when he said that he did not feel well, but it was his mind that was affected, not his body.

The manner in which Lightning Leo had handled the captain amazed him.

Porgy Jim had no doubt that it was the detective in disguise who had made "such a monkey" out of the bunco man.

"Ain't I making a mistake in stacking up ag'in' sich a man as Lightning Leo?" he muttered, as he slowly proceeded on his way.

"The old Jew feels blamed certain that he is going to pull the thing off all right," Porgy Jim continued. "But I don't feel near as certain about it as Black Aaron, and that is because I know the fly-cop a heap better than he does."

"Black Aaron has never run up ag'in' him yet, and arter he does he will have a blamed sight better opinion of him than he has now, or else I am away out in my reckoning."

"I begin to believe I was a fool to go into this thing," the hawker added, shaking his head, gravely.

"The boodle tempted me, but I'm blessed if it don't look now as if there was a heap sight bigger chance for us all to git pinched than to git the money."

"It is all along of the woman, too," he muttered, slowly. "If she hadn't put her jar into the thing, I reckon I wouldn't thought of throwing the detective down, and when I look back at the past, I will be blessed if her advice ever brought me any luck yet."

"I have heered folks say that women are aw-

ful smart at giving advice—that they kinder jump at a thing by instinct, instead of planning and plotting as a man does.

"Mebbe it is so, I dunno; but one thing I am sure of, and that is, every time I have taken my wife's advice, when it came to business, I have allers made a mess of it, so I don't take as much stock in the notion as I might, if things hadn't turned out in that way.

"The detective is no fool, and I don't think there is a doubt but what he has made up his mind to look arter the gal, and if that is so, it is big money the trick can't be worked.

"I reckon I will have to think awhile before I get in any deeper," Porgy Jim said in conclusion.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE CROOKS.

BLACK AARON had not underrated the abilities of the two crooks whom he employed to rob the young actress of the money which it was believed she possessed.

The pair had no trouble in making arrangements to take up their quarters in the boarding-house.

Despite the peculiar names which the men bore, the two were fellows of good appearance, and long years of experience had taught them just how to proceed to win the confidence of parties whom they desired to use.

Chuck Minson was a rather tall, slender fellow, of forty-five or thereabouts, who possessed a clerical look, so much so that one of his favorite games was to pass for a minister, while Nixy Yell was a short, stout man, one of the jolly kind, who looked more like a green country boy than aught else.

To the landlady of the boarding-house they represented themselves as being a couple of actors from Chicago, who had come to New York with the idea of getting an engagement on the metropolitan boards.

They arrived at the house about seven o'clock, saying that they had been recommended to put up there by some professional associates whom they had met in the West.

They had hand-sachels, and said their trunks would be delivered in the morning, and as this was a common occurrence when her guests arrived in the evening the landlady did not think there was anything strange in the fact that they did not bring their baggage with them.

The pair paid a week's board promptly in advance, and were assigned to a room on the same floor where the young actress had her apartment.

As the pair were late for the evening meal they had the dining-room all to themselves, a fact which aided their plans, for it enabled them to get on good terms with the waiter, a chuckle-headed youth, rather forward in his ways, and who was not remarkable for his wisdom.

It did not take the pair long to win the entire confidence of this party, and he gladly accepted an invitation which was extended to him at the end of the meal to come up to their room when he got through with his duties and smoke a cigar.

In a half-an-hour or so the youth made his appearance, and the crooks welcomed him with as much enthusiasm as though he was an old friend whom they had not seen for years.

They provided him with a cigar, the like of which he had never smoked, and flattered his pride by saying they wanted him to take them around and show them the sights of the great city.

In short, in a brief half-hour they completely won the confidence of the guileless youth, and he set them down as being a pair of the finest gentlemen whom he had ever encountered.

Having got the young fellow into this state of mind it was an easy matter for the pair to "pump" him to their heart's content.

So, by a series of judiciously put questions, they learned all about the house and its inmates, the youth being really anxious to give all the information in his power.

And thus the pair learned that the young actress, Miss Mortimer, occupied the next apartment to them—that she was a "daisy" young lady, who was not acting at present, as she had a two weeks' vacation.

Furthermore the young man volunteered the information that she had not been down to the evening meal as she had a headache and he had carried a repast up to her room.

The crooks thought that they understood what this meant.

The girl had a large amount of money in her possession, and she was reluctant to either leave

it in her room or carry it down to the supper-table, so she made the excuse of having a headache in order to have the meal brought to her.

Thanks to the talkativeness of the youth, before he departed the pair were as well acquainted with the boarding-house and its inmates as though they had dwelt beneath the roof for a month.

It was fully ten o'clock before the young man withdrew, leaving the pair well satisfied with the progress which they had made.

"The scheme is working beautifully!" Chuck Minson exclaimed, rubbing his hands gleefully together.

"Did you ever see a kid who could be pumped more easily?"

"Never in all my born days!" the other replied, emphatically.

"Bless your heart, he was just dying to tell all he knew."

"I think we can do the job all right," Chuck remarked, in a reflective way.

"There isn't much doubt about it."

"We ought to make sure, though, that we have got the room all right, for if the kid has made any blunder, or we have misunderstood him, it would knock the thing into a cocked hat."

"Oh, yes, we want to be certain before we go ahead."

"I will try a little game on the girl," Chuck Minson remarked with a grin.

"How's that?"

"Pretend that I have made a mistake in the room, and try to get in at her door. She will open it, then I can apologize for disturbing her, and explain that I thought it was my room—a natural mistake for a man to make in a strange house, you know."

"Oh, yes, that game will work all right, I think."

"Then we will be sure that we know the right room, for it would be mighty awkward to make a blunder about that."

"That is so."

"And then if I manage the thing rightly, I may be able to get a look at the door so as to see what fastenings there are on it."

"That is a good idea!" the other declared. "It is important for us to know whether there is a bolt or not."

"Oh, yes, for if there is, and we tried to get in without doctoring it, the odds are big we would alarm the gal, and then all the fat would be in the fire."

"We must not take any chances," the elder crook declared, "Always work on a sure thing, if you can."

"You are right for a thousand dollars!"

Then Chuck Minson proceeded to carry out the plan.

He went out into the entry and walked quietly to the head of the stairs, then he marched to the door of the girl's apartment and attempted to get in.

"Hello! have you got the door locked, Tom?" he exclaimed, pretending to be surprised.

In a moment the door opened and Miss Mortimer appeared.

The crook affected to be profoundly astonished.

"Eh! really, I must have made a mistake in the room!" he exclaimed. "I thought it was my door," he continued. "Haven't got used to the house yet. I beg ten thousand pardons, you know, for disturbing you!"

"Don't mention it, sir," the girl replied, politely.

"Very sorry, very sorry indeed!" the crook declared with a ceremonious bow as he retreated.

Miss Mortimer returned the salutation and closed the door.

Chuck Minson entered his own apartment.

"I have done the trick all right," he remarked, resuming his seat.

"The lock is a clumsy old-fashioned one and there is a bolt on the door."

"Don't either amount to much I suppose?"

"Oh, no; we can get in easily enough, but we will have to use the bit and brace in order to draw the bolt. The key we can turn in the lock with a pair of pincers."

"Does the girl look as if she was a sound sleeper?"

"Yes, she is a healthy looking young woman, and I don't think she will be apt to wake after she once gets sound asleep."

"Work the trick about two o'clock, eh?"

"Yes, that will give her ample time to get sound asleep," Chuck Minson replied after deliberating over the matter for a moment.

"I think it is likely she will not go to bed until late. She will be apt to worry over the fact that she has got the money in her possession—it will make her nervous, you know."

"Certain! the chances are big that it will work in that way."

"It will be twelve or one before she lies down," Chuck Minson calculated. "Being nervous about the money she will not be apt to get sleepy until she becomes fairly worn out, but after she once gets soundly asleep the chances are big that she will sleep like a dead woman, so that we will not have any trouble in cracking the crib."

"But it will not hardly be safe to do anything until after two," Nixy Yell observed.

"For we want to give her plenty of time to get serenely locked in the arms of Murphy."

"We will say three o'clock, so as to make a dead sure thing of it," the elder crook remarked.

"That will be best," Nixy Yell assented.

"But I say, how shall we pass the time away?" he continued. "I don't feel sleepy for I didn't wake up until about noon."

Both of these fellows belonged to the order of night-birds; during the dark hours, when honest toilers were buried in slumber, they were on the prowl for plunder, seldom seeking any rest until the gray light of the dawn lined the eastern skies.

"I took a long snooze myself," Chuck Minson observed. "And I am kind of like an owl, anyway, for I am decidedly brighter by night than by day."

"Say, suppose we have a little game of poker to pass the time away?" Nixy Yell exclaimed, abruptly. "I have a deck of cards, and after we get interested in the game the minutes will fly away rapidly enough."

The tall fellow looked at the other in an extremely suspicious way.

Both of the fellows were inveterate gamblers, as nearly all crooks are, the gaming-table usually absorbing all their ill-gotten gains, and Nixy Yell bore the reputation of being an extremely lucky man at cards, so when he proposed a game the other immediately jumped to the conclusion that his pal wanted a chance to "skin" him, as he remarked.

"Ah, no," the fat fellow replied. "If we play for five cents ante, and make the limit five dollars, neither one of us can lose much."

"All I am after is to pass the time away," he added.

"I don't mind trying you on in that way," Chuck Minson declared. "So long as you don't go in to take the hide off of me!"

So the two sat down and began to play, and soon became deeply interested in the game.

CHAPTER XVIII.

WINNING THE TREASURE.

DESPITE the smallness of the stakes Nixy Yell was such an expert player, or so favored by luck, as to be able to win over twenty-five dollars from his pal by three o'clock, when they stopped playing.

"Durned if I ever saw such luck!" Chuck Minson growled, reluctant to admit that his adversary owed his gains as much to his skill as anything else.

"I will give you your revenge some other time when, maybe, things will run more in your way," the fortunate player responded with a grin.

"All right!" Chuck Minson exclaimed.

Then the cards were put away and the two proceeded to prepare to "crack the crib" as Nixy Yell observed.

In the skirts of the two men's coats were secret pockets, each of which contained a complete assortment of the delicate, but strong tools used by housebreakers in their unlawful business.

The pair stole cautiously into the entry, and listened for a few moments to make sure that no one in the house was stirring.

"All was still, and it was evident that the inmates were all in slumber's chain."

To the door of the girl's apartment went the two crooks, and there they listened.

The light was burning within as they ascertained by peering through the keyhole, but they could not distinguish whether the girl had gone to bed or not; still, Mark Minson, who was unusually keen of hearing, said he thought he could catch the heavy, regular breathing of a sleeper.

The two did not waste any time in idle conjectures though, but went immediately to work.

By means of a pair of pincers they turned the key, thus unlocking the door, then bored a hole just above the bolt, and by the aid of a fine wire, which they inserted through the hole, catching the handle of the bolt in a loop of the

wire, they were able to draw the bolt back from the socket.

The fastenings being thus disposed of, all they had to do was to turn the door-knob and an entrance to the room was secured.

With stealthy tread the pair entered the apartment.

Miss Mortimer lay upon the lounge, at the further side of the room, fully attired.

She had evidently determined to sit up and watch her treasure, but had been overtaken by fatigue, reclined upon the lounge to rest herself and gone fast asleep.

And the "boodle" itself!

The eagle eyes of the two crooks glanced covetously around.

Upon the center-table was a parcel over which a towel had been carelessly cast.

Chuck Minson lifted up the cloth and a long package, securely done up in a stout brown paper, was revealed.

It required but a second for the crook to whip out his knife and cut a slit in the package, and when this was done his eyes were delighted by the sight of a United States bond.

"Thousand dollar fellows!" he exclaimed, in a hoarse whisper to his companion.

"Blessed if we ain't in for a good thing!" the other ejaculated, in the same cautious tones.

"Yes, it is a big boodle, and no mistake! Black Aaron is the man to get on the track of a good thing!"

"Let's git as soon as we kin!" Nixy Yell suggested, anxious to be off with the plunder.

"Right you are!" replied the other, and then the two departed, leaving the apartment as stealthily as they had entered it.

The pair were thorough workmen, well up in their business, and before they departed tarried a moment to remove all trace of the way in which they had got into the apartment.

With putty, colored to resemble the white paint of the door, they filled the hole which they had bored, and did the job so neatly that only a very careful inspection would reveal the fact that the door had been tampered with.

"The odds are big that when she wakes and finds that the door is not bolted, she will come to the conclusion that she forgot to move the bolt," Chuck Minson observed, with a grin, to his companion.

Then, from the outside of the door, the key was again turned in the lock.

"This is as neat a job as we ever worked!" Chuck Minson declared, with true professional pride, to his pal as the pair stole with noiseless steps down the stairs.

"You bet!" responded the other, tersely.

The pair made their way onto the street without any trouble, for there wasn't a soul awake in the house, and then proceeded directly to the all-night saloon in Amity street, Chuck Minson carrying the precious package of bonds under his coat, so that no chance passer-by could catch sight of it.

The crooks were in high glee, and they knew they had "won" a valuable prize, and they were delighted with the ease with which they had done the job.

They were old patrons of the all-night house, and so knew just how to go to reach the particular private room at the back of the saloon where Black Aaron and the three plotters waited for their arrival.

An anxious look was on the faces of all four when the crooks entered.

The party were seated around a table, upon which were bottles and glasses, showing that the men had indulged in liquid refreshments to help pass the time away.

Nixy Yell closed the door carefully, while Chuck Minson advanced to the table.

"Well, gents, I am pleased to announce that I have done the trick up brown and no mistake!" he exclaimed.

And then, with the air of a conqueror, he took the parcel from under his coat and placed it in the center of the table.

"Aha!" exclaimed the old Jew, his eyes gleaming, and a covetous smile wrinkling his face. "You are a jewel of a mans, my tear! I tell all der boys, dere ish no smarter crook in your line in der world!"

"You can bet I can hold my end up with any of them!" Chuck Minson declared, proudly.

"Take a man about my size, with Nixy Yell to back him, and we defy all creation to beat us!"

"You are jewels, my tears, both of you!" Black Aaron announced.

"And now let us see v'at we hafe got here!" he continued.

Then, drawing a knife from his pocket, he cut the string which bound the package.

As the paper opened the United States bond was revealed, and a long-drawn breath escaped from the lips of all the eager men.

Then, as the last cord was cut, the folded papers, released from their confinement, tumbled over on the table, and this proceeding caused a cry of surprise to escape from all of the men.

The package was a "dummy" one.

There was a bond at the top and another one at the bottom, but the rest were only plain white papers.

And the bonds too were registered ones, which were worthless except to the owner.

The plotters stared in blank amazement, which soon changed to consternation by the abrupt entrance into the room of Lightning Leo, followed by a squad of armed detectives.

"Gentlemen, I will have to trouble you to hold out your hands for the bracelets," the man-hunter said, in his quiet, matter-of-fact way.

"Don't attempt to show fight, for you do not stand the least chance of escaping!" he continued. "I think I have got you dead to rights this time, and no mistake!"

Reluctantly the captured rascals allowed the handcuffs to be placed upon their wrists.

Old Socks and the crooks swore a little, and the Jew tried to explain that he "shust" dropped in by accident.

"Keep your explanation for the court-room. I do not sit in judgment on you," the detective said.

"But I don't think you will get out of the scrape this time, for I have you fairly in the net. You played a good game, and played it well, but Lightning Leo's Luck was too much for you."

The detective was a prophet.

All the men were convicted and sentenced, and so carefully did the detective manage the case that none suspected that it was Porgy Jim who had played the traitor at the last moment.

Kenneth Ruthven swore that when he was released he would kill the man-hunter.

How he tried to keep his word we will reveal anon, when we again tell of the adventures of the greatest detective of them all, Lightning Leo.

THE END.

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